



BAYONNE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Interim Superintendent

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we enter the New Year, I wanted to share some information with you to help continue to keep our children safe. I encourage you to monitor your children's social media as there is a dangerous social media phenomenon called the "Momo Challenge." Please use this as an opportunity to remind your children not to accept any invitation to play from an unknown number and not to click on unidentified links.

The Momo Challenge can be found on WhatsApp (a free smartphone messaging application) and on Facebook. This is just one example of dangerous "games" on social media. This "challenge" involves a frightening avatar making contact with a child from an unknown number or name. The child is asked to perform various actions and tasks, and provide photos as proof. Some tasks have even led to suicide. At this time there is one confirmed death of a 12 year old girl in Argentina, and three deaths currently under investigation in connection with the challenge. Students as young as first-graders have allegedly acted on some directions from the challenge.

One of the first clues for parents to be concerned with is the image of a Japanese statue of a woman with bulging eyes and scary features. Children are given the series of tasks to finally meet the "Momo."

I also encourage you to remind your children to change email and social media passwords frequently and block unknown numbers inviting them to play immediately. Please notify your principal or counselor of any attempted contacts to your children of this form of cyber-bullying spreading through social media and cell phone.

While these digital venues are blocked on district-issued devices, individuals may still be able to access such sites through their personal devices and accounts. Currently, there are no confirmed uses of this "Challenge" in the Bayonne Public School District, however, I feel it is important to share information to help build awareness and keep our children safe.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Wanko, Ph.D.
Interim Superintendent