

Online Hoaxes

At times, HWDSB staff receive calls from concerned caregivers about disturbing, viral hoaxes or “challenges” that target children online via popular social media channels. These “challenges” often receive extensive media coverage and create anxiety and stress for children and their families.

We encourage caregivers to take this as an opportunity to have intentional conversations with their children about what they encounter online. These discussions could include:

- Reminding children to never contact strangers online, on any platform;
- Encourage children to share any worries or concerns with you;
- Ensure children understand the importance of not giving personal information to anyone they do not know;
- Tell children no-one has the right to make them do anything they do not want to do;
- Set privacy systems on devices with your child to have the conversation about safety.

It is also important for parents to know what children can access online. We have the following suggestions for families:

- Set privacy settings for all social media and gaming applications;
- Keep video games and YouTube watching in shared family spaces;
- Set up video game restrictions to friends only;
- Set up “restricted” mode on YouTube for your child’s account so inappropriate content is not available to them or stream YouTube content through a family-friendly site such as www.watchkin.com.
- Look for digital citizenship safety tips - here’s an example: Online Safety Rules for Kids <https://canadasafetycouncil.org/online-safety-rules-kids/>

We suggest that you build the above practices into your family’s internet use routine. If you have any questions or need support with respect to discussing online safety with your child, please contact the school office.