

MONSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

We wanted to make families aware of a new social media app that we just learned about which could have serious implications. The *Blue Whale Challenge* is an app that instructs its participants (many preteens and teens) to carry out increasingly dangerous tasks and self-harm over 50 days. Users are encouraged to tag friends on social media and "challenge" them to participate in the game.

USA Today (May 25, 2017) reported on how it works - "Over the course of 50 days, an anonymous administrator assigns kids self-harm tasks. The challenges may start by asking kids to watch a scary movie and then grow increasingly dangerous to include acts like cutting. On the 50th day, the participant is supposed to commit suicide. The game can reach kids through social-media channels like Instagram, SnapChat, YouTube and texting."

It's very concerning because these apps are targeting a very vulnerable population. We would encourage parents to:

- * ask your kids if there are ANY new games or popular challenges that they or their friends are hearing about or playing on social media or online
- * search for hashtags like #BlueWhaleChallenge and/or photos of a blue whale on your kids' social media accounts.

This letter is not meant to alarm anyone, but rather to encourage parents to be proactive in protecting their children from potential negative influences on the internet.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to your building principals or counselors should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Cheryl A. Clarke
Superintendent

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