



St. Francis de Sales - St. Stephen School  
17 Elmwood Avenue  
Geneva, New York 14456

March 1, 2019

Dear St. Francis de Sales - St. Stephen School Families:

Recently, there have been myriad warnings circulating on the internet, as well as in the mainstream news, about dangerous apps and “challenges.” We are warned that these media may be putting our children at risk for self-injury or suicide or placing them in harm’s way by allowing predators to target them. When I have come across articles from reputable sources, I have posted some of these warnings on Facebook.

There have also been messages circulating that one “challenge” in particular, the “Momo Challenge,” which I posted about, is not real. After doing some more investigation, I have learned that while the disturbing image has been widely circulated, there is nothing more than a few anecdotal accounts of this reported “challenge.” While these reports may be a viral hoax, **the dangers of the internet and social media are all too real.** Of course, information technology is useful and necessary in academic pursuits and the world of work, so what are parents to do in the face of these dangers?

“This is an important reminder to parents that interacting with digital/social media is a life skill that must be learned,” says pediatrician, Dr. Elizabeth Murray, discussing dangerous media on the internet in a recent People.com article. “We need to look at the safety associated with our child’s online presence in a similar way to teaching them to cross the street or drive a car. There is a large knowledge gap between parents and kids in many households when it comes to social media. Spoiler: The kids know more than the adults!” she added. “As parents, we need to ensure our child’s safety while at the same time giving them the skills needed to navigate safely.” (Juneau)

If your children have phones or computers/tablets with access to the internet, it is essential for you to know exactly what apps they have installed and what those apps do. Some apps that pose potential danger or allow children to hide content from parents masquerade as harmless apps like calculators. Others expose children to inappropriate and dangerous material which has been inserted into otherwise child friendly media. One example of this is “Kids YouTube” videos featuring children’s characters that have had objectionable or harmful material spliced into them.

**Please, take time this weekend to have a talk with your child(ren) about their use of social media and the internet.** I urge you to monitor their use of the internet closely, limit screen time, and have them charge their devices in your room at night. Finally, if you want your children to have a restful night’s sleep, screens should be turned off at least 60 minutes before bedtime.

Thank you, and may God bless you,

Mrs. Mary C. Mantelli, Principal

Juneau, J. (2019, February 28). Is the Momo challenge real? What parents need to know about dangerous content in kids' videos. *People.com*. Retrieved from <https://people.com/parents/momo-challenge-dangerous-online-content-kids-explainer-tips-for-parents/>

[www.stfrancisststephen.org](http://www.stfrancisststephen.org)

(315) 789-1828 · Fax (315) 789-9179