

Dear APS Community,

Today being March First, we are kicking off **March is Reading Month** across the district and across the nation. As always, we encourage every month to be a reading month. In addition to the many resources that our teachers provide using researched based practices to teach literacy, I would encourage parents to visit the **Adrian District Library or the Lenawee District Library** as a resource for countless numbers of books to help engage children ignite the passion for reading. While March is Reading Month often focuses on adults coming in and reading to students, I would strongly encourage having your child read to you or other family members or even a pet to build their literacy and fluency skills.



Michener students gets to read to Hacki, a therapy dog every Tuesday and Wednesday Morning

I am also happy to report that with today being March 1<sup>st</sup>, this is the first full week of school we have had since January 14th. I want to **thank parents, students, and staff for their patience and flexibility as schedules, games, rehearsals, and practices have been impacted greatly the last two months.** As of today, we do plan to file for the 3 forgiveness days from the state. This would require us to make up one day at the end of the school year (Prairie would need to make up two because of a power outage). I am hesitant to make that official as there has been legislation introduced that would forgive the two State of Emergency days called by the governor. We also live in Michigan so there are any number of reasons school could be cancelled or delayed in the coming weeks. So more to come for sure.

**Congratulations to the students from the Springbrook Advance 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Science class. Students participated in the Tri-County Science Fair last month. I am proud to announce that this year's group is the most "winningest" team in school history. Congratulations to all the students that participated and applied their passion for science and STEM learning. Science learning starts early at APS. Alexander Elementary will be hosting their STEAM Night on Monday March 4<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 – 7:00.**



Springbrook Science Fair Winners

As I previously communicated there have been a number of concerns on a national level about the MOMO internet issue. Recently Mrs. Strang, from the OK2Say Michigan Cyber Safety Initiative, spoke to Michener students about staying safe when online. She taught students that just like when you get in a car, you should always buckle your seatbelt; when getting online you should always tell a trusted adult first. Mrs. Strang also shared the 3 "I Keep" rules for staying safe. **I Keep Safe** all my personal information. **I Keep Away** from internet strangers. **I Keep Telling** trusted adults. It is a great idea for parents to review these rules with their children as well as look at how their child's devices are set up.



It's important to note that new challenges are arising on the internet all the time. We have created this guide to raise awareness of the issue and offer advice on helping parents to talk to their children about making safer decisions online. See also our '7 conversation starters' guide for more tips on better communication with your child.



Momo is a sinister 'challenge' that has been around for some time. It has recently resurfaced and once again has come to the attention of schools and children across the country. Dubbed the 'suicide killer game', Momo has been heavily linked with apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and most recently (and most worryingly)... YouTube Kids. The scary doll-like figure reportedly sends graphic violent images, and asks users to partake in dangerous challenges like waking up at random hours and has even been associated with self-harm. It has been reported that the 'Momo' figure was originally created as a sculpture and featured in an art gallery in Tokyo and unrelated to the 'Momo' challenge we are hearing about in the media.



What parents need to know about

# MOMO

## CHILDREN'S VIDEOS BEING 'HIJACKED'

There have been recent reports that some seemingly innocent videos on YouTube and YouTube Kids (such as 'surprise eggs', unboxing videos and Minecraft videos) have been edited by unknown sources to include violence provoking and/or other inappropriate content. Even though YouTube monitor and remove videos that include inappropriate content, clips can be uploaded and viewed thousands of times before they get reported and removed. As a parent, it's difficult to spot these videos as the harmful content doesn't appear until partway through the video.

## DISTRESSING FOR CHILDREN

Popular YouTubers and other accounts have been uploading reaction videos, showing their experience of the MOMO challenge. Some of the videos include a disclosure message warning that the content may be "inappropriate or offensive to some audiences" and that "viewer discretion is advised" but these videos are still easily accessed by clicking 'I understand and wish to proceed'. The image of the 'Momo' character can be deeply distressing to children and young people and it's important to note that it may slip through parental settings and filters.

## SUGGESTED VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

Video apps such as YouTube include an 'up next' feature which automatically starts playing another video based on the video just watched. Due to YouTube's algorithm, users are shown 'suggested videos' that they may be interested in. The thumbnails used on suggested videos are purposefully created in a way to encourage viewers to click them. During our research, we found that when watching one Momo related video, we were shown countless other Momo themed videos and other scary content which would be age-inappropriate for children under 18.



National Online Safety

## Top Tips for Parents

### TELL THEM IT'S NOT REAL

Just like any urban legend or horror story, the concept can be quite frightening and distressing for young people. Whilst this may seem obvious, it's important for you to reiterate to your child that Momo is not a real person and cannot directly harm them! Also, tell your child to not go openly searching for this content online as it may only cause more distress.

### BE PRESENT

It's important for you, as a parent or carer, to be present while your children are online. This will give you a greater understanding of what they are doing on their devices, as well as providing you with the opportunity to discuss, support and stop certain activities that your child may be involved in. As the nature of each task become progressively worse it's also important to recognise any changes in your child's behaviour.

### TALK REGULARLY WITH YOUR CHILD

As well as monitoring your child's activity, it's important for you discuss it with them too. Not only will this give you an understanding of their online actions, but those honest and frequent conversations will encourage your child to feel confident to discuss issues and concerns they may have related to the online world.

### DEVICE SETTINGS & PARENTAL CONTROLS

Ensure that you set up parental controls for your devices at home. This will help to restrict the types of content that your child can view, as well as help you to monitor their activity. In addition to this, it's vital that you are aware of your device and account settings to ensure your child's utmost safety. For example, on YouTube you can turn off 'suggested auto-play' on videos to stop your child from viewing content that they have not directly selected.

### PEER PRESSURE

Trends and viral challenges can be tempting for children to take part in; no matter how dangerous or scary they seem. Make sure you talk to your child about how they shouldn't succumb to peer pressure and do anything they are not comfortable with, online or offline. If they are unsure, encourage them to talk to you or another trusted adult.

### REAL OR HOAX?

As a parent it is natural to feel worried about certain things you see online that may be harmful to your child. However, not everything you see online is true. Check the validity of the source and be mindful of what you share as it may only cause more worry.

### REPORT & BLOCK

You can't always rely on parental controls to block distressing or harmful material. People find ways around a platform's algorithm in order to share and promote this type of material. Due to this, we advise that you flag and report any material you deem to be inappropriate or harmful as soon as you come across it. You should also block the account/content to prevent your child from viewing it. Also encourage your child to record/screenshot any content they feel could be malicious to provide evidence in order to escalate the issue to the appropriate channels.

### FURTHER SUPPORT

Speak to the safeguarding lead within your child's school should you have any concerns regarding your child's online activity or malicious content that could affect them.

If your child sees something distressing, it is important that they know where to go to seek help and who their trusted adults are. They could also contact Childline where a trained counsellor will listen to anything that's worrying them.

The Childline phone number is 0800 1111.



SOURCES:  
<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/sick-videos-youtube-youtube-kids-14052196>  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk>  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-47359623>

Fifth graders at **Lincoln Elementary School** presented a **ukulele concert** in February to a packed house of parents and family members. Thank you to Mrs. Force, Mrs. Benschoter, Mrs. Felver, and the students for their work. We express our gratitude to the **Adrian Schools Education Foundation** for **funding the classroom instruments in all of our elementary schools.**



**Tonight is the Adrian High School Balladier Showcase at the Performing Arts Center.** The program starts at 7:30 and will highlight the wonderful work from Mr. Antalek and his students.

GO MAPLES!!!

*Bob Behnke*

Superintendent

Check out these great stories featuring APS students and staff in the news:

International Student Presentation:

<https://www.lenconnect.com/news/20190301/international-students-topic-of-discussion-at-board-meeting>

High School Engineering Classrooms Bid Approved:

<https://www.lenconnect.com/news/20190228/bid-approved-for-adrian-high-school-projects>

Chris Gilliam Approved as new Football Coach/AHS Teacher

<https://www.lenconnect.com/news/20190228/adrian-school-board-approves-new-teacher-head-football-coach>

Prairie Daddy Daughter Dance:

<https://www.lenconnect.com/photogallery/MI/20190226/PHOTOGALLERY/226009999/PH/1>

Snow Day Coverage:

<https://www.13abc.com/content/news/Most-districts-in-Lenawee-Co-closed-Thursday-due-to-icy-dirt-roads-506182671.html>

McKinley Update:

<https://www.lenconnect.com/news/20190217/habitat-exploring-options-for-old-mckinley-location>