Shelton Families,

From time to time, the Internet and news media have stories that can be very concerning to families. Currently, many news sources are sharing information regarding the 'Momo Challenge". According to these reports, the Momo Challenge is a form of cyberbullying and has been seen on two social networking platforms: WhatsApp and YouTube. The description is that children using these platforms receive anonymous threatening messages and pictures. We believe that some children in Shelton may be aware of this phenomenon.

While there is a great deal of skepticism around the existence of the Momo Challenge we want to take this opportunity to remind our families of the importance of monitoring the online activity of our children and to share good Internet safety practices for families.

There are a number of excellent resources available online. Some recommendations include (from https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/net-safety.html):

Getting Involved in Kids' Online Activities

More important than blocking objectionable material is teaching your kids safe and responsible online behavior, and keeping an eye on their Internet use.

Basic guidelines to share with your kids for safe online use:

- Follow the family rules, and those set by the Internet service provider.
- Never post or trade personal pictures.
- Never reveal personal information, such as address, phone number, or school name or location.
- Use only a screen name and don't share passwords (other than with parents).
- Never agree to get together in person with anyone met online without parent approval and/or supervision.
- Never respond to a threatening email, message, post, or text.
- Always tell a parent or other trusted adult about any communication or conversation that was scary or hurtful.

Basic guidelines for parental supervision:

- Spend time online together to teach your kids appropriate online behavior.
- Keep the computer in a common area where you can watch and monitor its use, not in individual bedrooms. Monitor any time spent on smartphones or tablets.
- Bookmark kids' favorite sites for easy access.
- Check your credit card and phone bills for unfamiliar account charges.
- Find out what, if any, online protection is offered by your child's school, after-school center, friends' homes, or any place where kids could use a computer without your supervision.

- Shelton Public Schools has an Internet filter in place that works to screen student and staff from accessing sites that are not appropriate. Additionally, the school district uses GoGuardian to monitor the use of Chromebooks while in school.
- Take your child seriously if he or she reports an uncomfortable online exchange.

Talk to your kids. Keep an open line of communication, and make sure that they feel comfortable turning to you when they have problems online.

Additional Resources for Families:

- https://www.webwise.ie/parents/advice-top-10-tips-for-parents/
- http://www.pbs.org/parents/expert-tips-advice/2018/01/online-safety-tips-parents-young-children
- https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/viral-youtube-challenges-internet-stunts-popular-with-kids
- https://internetsafety101.org/pornographyrulesofengagement

Additional Resources about the reported Momo Challenge:

- http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/02/momo-overhyped-youtube.html
- https://www.snopes.com/news/2019/02/26/momo-challenge-suicide-game/
- https://www.wired.com/story/momo-hoax-viral-scares-advice/