

Richmond Consolidated School Brings Internet Safety Presentation to Caregivers

The impact of social media on our youth has been deemed a national crisis by the Surgeon General. Studies show that social media is an addiction. What social media does to the brain has an impact on learning, behaviors, and social emotional well-being. Dr. Beth Choquette reports Richmond Consolidated School's faculty/staff and administrators have seen the impact of social media on students. Bullying, body shaming, inappropriate video/language and predators are only a small sample of what students could see and face online. Parents and educators are obliged to learn about the apps, games and other risks that can cause irreversible harm to students.

To address this need, Dr. Choquette hosted a Caregivers' Guide to Internet Safety on October 17th, 2023. The presentation was provided by the Juvenile Prosecutor and Youth Program Specialist of the Berkshires County District Attorney's Office. The event drew an enthusiastic audience, underlining the community's growing awareness of the importance of internet safety for children. Caregivers and parents gathered to hear the valuable insights and recommendations provided.

The goal of the presentation was to expand knowledge, recognize unhealthy behaviors and protect students and families.

Topics included:

1. **Current Apps, Live Gaming, and Social Media Concerns:** Caregivers were informed about the latest apps, live gaming platforms, and social media channels that pose potential risks to their children. Keeping up-to-date with these platforms is essential in safeguarding kids from online dangers.
2. **2. Red Flag Behaviors:** The presentation discussed red flag behaviors that may indicate a child is at risk online. Recognizing these warning signs is crucial in identifying potential issues and intervening when necessary.
3. **3. Real-Life Case Studies:** Attendees were presented with real-life case studies to illustrate how quickly children can fall victim to online predators. These

examples provided tangible evidence of the risks and dangers children face online, making it more relatable for caregivers.

4.

4. Proactive Monitoring Strategies: Caregivers were provided with strategies to proactively monitor their child's online behaviors. Being vigilant and actively involved in their children's online activities can help ensure safe and positive interactions on the internet.

This presentation served as a valuable resource for caregivers, equipping them with the knowledge and tools needed to protect their children in the digital age. It was clear the need for information on this topic resonated with attendees, making the presentation a significant success in promoting online safety in our community.

Ina Wilhelm with Dr. Beth Choquette
School Committee Chair and Superintendent/Principal