



Safe Schools and Communities for our Students December Newsletter

December 16th, 2014

This week marks the last week of classes before the Christmas holidays and this letter is the second Community Letter for the 2014-15 school year. Our intention is to provide consistent information from the school district and Tri Cities support agencies to all of our families and to inform parents of resources and ideas to keep our children and youth safe and unharmed in our communities and neighbourhoods.

On Our Radar

Administrators, counsellors and other educators are becoming increasingly concerned about the number of students who are having difficulty monitoring and/or limiting their on line “gaming” screen time. In some cases, students in this District have become so immersed in online gaming and the games have become so engaging, students have had difficulty leaving their homes. While we recognize this as extreme, there are some warning signs and last week, Dana Martin from **Youth Concurrent** provided us with some very valuable information and guidelines that we want to pass on to parents.

Our children are drawn to MMORPG games (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games). These games, such as World of Warcraft (W.O.W.), W.O.W. Expansion and W.O.W. Subscription Revenue are multi-million dollar enterprises that draw players in, at first by making it relatively easy to “go up” levels, and then, keeping them engaged at the highest level by setting the rewards on variable schedules. As well, “Virtual World” continues to evolve regardless of whether the kids are playing or not. Therefore, high level teams and scorers (players are expected to play in teams at higher levels) will play for hours to maintain their position. These virtual worlds encourage connections with real people from around the world, and for some kids, the online relationships they create provide everything, albeit artificially, that real life relationships offer: friendship, common interests, working together, betrayal, lying, death and loss – and for some it becomes their only world.

Does Your Child Spend Time Gaming? Tips for Parents

1. If you think your child is too immersed, you are right – follow your instincts.
2. Limit online play time (see guidelines below) and if your child is currently over-engaged, make a plan to reduce screen time by 25% per week until the guideline time is reached.
3. Be sure that your child has something else to do instead, as a substitute activity, that s/he enjoys doing when reducing online time. Cleaning the bedroom or doing homework will not seem like a fair or good substitute activity.

4. Be aware of what kinds of games are being purchased and what is coming into your home. For example, one of the upper levels on “Grand Theft Auto” has a reward of “virtually” assaulting a woman.

Ratings

1. **EC (Early Childhood)** = Titles rated EC (Early Childhood) have content that may be suitable for persons ages 3 and older. Contains no material that parents would find inappropriate.
2. **E (Everyone)** = Titles rated E (Everyone) have content that may be suitable for persons ages 6 and older. Titles in this category may contain minimal cartoon, fantasy or mild violence and/or infrequent use of mild language.
3. **E10+ (Everyone 10+)** = Titles rated E10+ (Everyone 10+) have content that may be suitable for ages 10 and older. Titles in this category may contain more cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language, and/or minimal suggestive themes.
4. **T (Teen)** = Titles rated T (Teen) have content that may be suitable for ages 13 and older. Titles in this category may contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling, and/or infrequent use of strong language.
5. **M (Mature)** = Titles rated M (Mature) have content that may be suitable for persons ages 17 and older. Titles in this category may contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content, and/or strong language
6. **RP (Rating Pending)** = Titles listed as RP (Rating Pending) have been submitted to the ESRB and are awaiting final rating. This symbol appears only in advertising prior to a game's release.
7. **AO (Adults Only)** = Titles rated AO (Adults Only) have content that should only be played by persons 18 years and older. Titles in this category may include prolonged scenes of intense violence and/or graphic sexual content and nudity. <http://www.esrb.org/ratings/index.jsp>

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a **MAXIMUM of 2 hours of screen time per day** for children for recreational purposes.

1. Ages 6-8 – 30 min/day; 45 min-1 hour on weekends
2. Ages 9-12 – 1 hour per day – up to 2 hours on the weekend
3. Ages 13-17 – 1.5 hours per day – up to 2 hours on weekends

Sincerely,

**Julie Pearce, Co-Chair
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