

# March 2019 Newsletter

## Dates to Remember

March 6 – Pizza Day

March 11 to 15<sup>th</sup> – March Break – No School – Enjoy the holiday

March 18 - Student Census, grades four through eight

March 20 – Pizza Day

March 20 – Harvey’s Night (near Leon’s), 3 to 7 pm

March 27 – Pizza Day

March 28 – Jump Rope for Heart Kick Off Assembly

April 3<sup>rd</sup> – Wellness Night for Families, 6:30 to 8:30 pm

## Principal’s Message

It has been an eventful winter here at Brier Park! We have had some staff changes this term. Ms. Matheson accepted an instructional coach position with our school board. She works with teachers at other schools helping with math instruction. Ms. Pustai is a long term occasional teacher filling in as our learning resource teacher. Mrs. Stott, our long term occasional kindergarten teacher accepted a contract at Centennial Grandwoodlands. Ms. McGibbon is an occasional teacher completing the long term kindergarten assignment until Ms. Craig returns.

I would like to thank the teachers for their efforts writing the report cards. They spent many hours marking, writing comments and then entering those comments into our new report card program. I hope the report cards provide you with a time to speak with your child about their successes and their next steps in their learning.

I would also like to thank Mme Power and the Pink Shirt Day Team for their presentation on Wednesday. The kids did a great job preparing and presenting on the Anti-Bullying theme. The audience listened well. Hopefully, the message of being kind and standing up for others resonates with them and leads to positive action.

Have a great holiday over the March Break.

Mrs. Brittain

## Safety Concern:

The Momo challenge, has resurfaced on multiple social media platforms. The Momo challenge first appeared in 2016 on a mobile instant messaging application called Whatsapp. A phone number associated with the name Momo and a picture of a girl with bulging eyes and widespread mouth would use a feature of the app called quick add where the app would allow the user to add and message multiple numbers in a short period of time to then send messages back and forth.

The nature of the messages usually starts out innocent such as “wanna play a game?” and then evolve into Momo encouraging the child to engage in self-harm and suicidal behaviours. Users will see the creepy image of Momo and will be enticed to contact it through Whatsapp. If they do, they will be sent disturbing and scary images and given orders which are often to cause self-harm or even to attempt suicide. Users are threatened if they don’t follow through that they will be cursed, or their family will be hurt. As adults, the threat of a curse may not faze us, but it can be terrifying to children. (Peel Children’s Safety Village, 2019)

Recently the Momo challenge has reappeared in multiple YouTube videos that are specifically intended for younger audiences. Typically, the Momo challenge will be featured in videos (such as Peppa Pig, Paw Patrol, Minecraft gameplay) that come from new or unreliable YouTube accounts.

### **Suggestions:**

1. Encourage critical thinking no matter what the age. Reassure students that it is not real. Just like any urban legend or horror story (e.g., Slenderman) it is designed to upset and cause fear. While it may seem obvious, it’s important for you to reiterate to the child that Momo is not a real person and cannot directly harm them. Also, tell the child not to go searching for this content online, as it may only cause more distress.
2. Encourage parent-child interaction. It is important for parents to be aware of what their children are doing online, and ideally, be present when their children are online. If students are online without supervision, discuss the importance of having a trusted adult they can talk to if they see something that is not right. Share websites for reporting such as needhelpnow.ca and cybertip.ca and kidshelphone.ca.
3. Encourage good choices: it isn’t just Momo we should be worried about as caring adults. Access to violent, dangerous, inappropriate, scary content and cyberbullying is everywhere online. Discuss what age appropriate content is with students and why it is important. Also, discuss how peer pressure can sometimes influence our choices and expose us to things that make us uncomfortable.

### **Online Resources:**

- Pevnet for info for parents: <https://www.prevnet.ca/resources/cyber-tool>
- Kids Help Phone for online safety: <https://kidshelpphone.ca/tag/online-safety/>
- OPHEA: <https://www.ophea.net/article/safe-savvy-online#>
- National Online Safety: <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/>

## Online Safety Event for Parents:

- A reminder that Grand Erie's Parent Involvement Committee (GEPIC) is hosting a free event for parents in April that's focused on Online Safety
- **Social Networking and Online Safety – What Parents Need to Know**
  - Date/Time: Tuesday, April 16 at 6 p.m.
  - Location: Theatre at North Park Collegiate and Vocational School (280 North Park Street, Brantford, Ontario)
  - Guest Speaker: Paul Davis
    - Davis brings more than 27 years of IT knowledge and experience to Grand Erie. He is an expert in all of the latest social media trends and topics that parents need to know about.
    - His intense presentation will focus on how parents can keep children safe online. Davis will cover some of the following topics: cyberbullying, sexting, smartphones, digital trails and online security

*Credit for content: Peel Children's Safety Village, National Online Safety, School Mental Health ASSIST, North American Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response, BHNCDSB Mental Health Lead*

## New Ontario Law Makes All Grand Erie Schools Smoke-Free



Last fall, the Provincial Government passed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which prohibits smoking tobacco or cannabis as well as vaping in public areas, such as schools.

The new Ontario law prohibits smoking or vaping within 20 metres of a school's property line. For reference, 20 metres is the approximate length of 1.5 school buses.

In addition to covering all indoor areas at a school, the new law applies to outdoor spaces such as playgrounds or sports fields. Anyone caught smoking or vaping in a prohibited area could face a minimum fine of \$305.

As a result of this new Ontario law, all Grand Erie schools and Board facility sites are now smoke-free.

The local Health Units are supporting Grand Erie with this change, providing new signage (see above), education and awareness information and materials as well as next steps for students and staff looking to quit smoking or vaping.

For more information on the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, visit: <https://bit.ly/2FGV4y5>.

### **A Message from our Health Nurse...**

Please see the nutrition flyer attached.