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Dear Parent/ Guardian,

Every day we hear from our students about what they see on YouTube or about the games that they play. The internet can be a wonderful educational tool for finding and sharing information, traveling to distant places, and enjoying experiences you might otherwise never get to experience. However, recently we have also heard from both students and parents about negative and frightening online experiences. Most of these are occurring while your children are playing games online with other people. Emotions can get very high while playing games online and the result can be gamers using unkind, disrespectful, and threatening language toward each other.

Remember to closely monitor your child's screen time. As parents, you have the greatest impact on keeping your children safe online. You need to establish and maintain open lines of communication. Let your child know that he can come to you whenever he has a question or concern about online behaviors. Encourage your child to tell you immediately whenever others are threatening, unkind, or mean online, regardless of whether it is happening to him or others. Be proactive – do not wait for your child to come to you with a problem; instead make sure your child understands what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate online behavior. Lastly, set clear rules for computer use by designating which online sites are acceptable, how long he can use the computer/device, and what games are allowed.

Moving forward we must work together to keep our children safe as they enter an increasingly digital world. In a recent assembly, Webutuck Elementary School students were reminded to be responsible, respectful and safe not only at school but also when at home playing online games. Please refer to the back of this letter for further tips about how to keep your child safe on the internet and while playing online games.

Jennifer Hengen
Principal

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