

Copperhaven School

Newsletter



COPPERHAVEN
COBRAS

January 12, 2024

Principal's Message

In this newsletter edition, I'd like to share some information shared at a recent Council of School Councils meeting. COSC is a meeting that occurs at the PSD Centre of Education every couple of months in which the school council chairs within the school division meet to share ideas and insights regarding serving on school councils. At the last meeting, Division Principal for Student Services, Bryn Spence, along with PSD Communications Director Jordi Weidman shared a presentation on youth and social media. While much of the information was familiar, what was new was the information about '**vault apps**' or hidden apps on kids' cell phones. A vault app is an application that is designed to look harmless and serves as a front or is used to hide information that the user does not want someone else to see or know about. Most often, a vault app looks like a calculator or some other innocent app.

Why would a kid use a vault app? Typically kids use them to hide photos or videos, however, they can also be used to hide files or even other apps including those involving social media. At school, a calculator vault app opens a world of less than desirable possibilities when working in a less supervised area such as a library or common area. Outside of school, things become a little more complicated. While no kid wants a parent or guardian to see an awkward or embarrassing picture or Tik Tok video that they have created, vault apps can be used to hide more nefarious activities such as sexting (or even more concerning, sexploitation), online bullying or harassment, and/or to mask other illegal or inappropriate activities. Sadly, the RCMP have confirmed dozens of these cases and activities occurring in Spruce Grove and surrounding area. Plain and simple, vault apps are an effective way for kids to hide things from parents and guardians that they don't want them to see. Quite frankly, the potential from harm towards your own children and others is quite pronounced. You can find links to some common vault apps here:

<https://www.svicac.org/vault-apps-parents-should-know-about>
<https://www.netnanny.com/blog/secret-vault-apps-that-hide-things-on-your-kid-e2-80-99s-phone/>

So, how can you find out if there are vault apps on your child's cell phone? Some of the warning signs are when there are multiple apps of a similar type such as a calculator or flashlight. Often, kids will hide or turn off their cell phone when you approach them or get too close. A big red flag is when a child refuses to hand over or have you look at their cell phones, or inversely, they are quick to hand over their cell phone believing that you won't know where to look. For those who are a bit more tech savvy, this article provides other ways to detect vault apps on computers and cell phones:

<https://www.lifewire.com/find-hidden-apps-on-android-phones-4178932>

Should parents look through a child's phone content? Is it a breach of trust or privacy? Ultimately, the decision rests upon the parent or guardian. However, if a stranger approached our child(ren) on the playground or a mall, not one of us would hesitate to intervene post haste. Shouldn't we do the same for strangers approaching our children online?

Linda Simmonds

Dates to Remember

January 23 School Council 6:30-8:00 p.m.
January 30 Report Cards available in PowerSchool

Thank You

In December, right before Winter Break, staff of Copperhaven were the lucky recipients of boxes of baked goods. These goods were prepared, boxed and delivered to the staff by the Staff Appreciation Committee of the Copperhaven School Council. The gratitude and appreciation we all felt was tremendous—thank you!

Music News

The Junior & Senior Choirs will be starting right away!

JUNIOR CHOIR is for students in grades 2 & 3. Practice is held twice a week at lunch recess on Days 2 & 4. The first practice will be Monday Jan 15; this first practice will be a chance for grade 2 & 3 students to “Test Drive” Jr. Choir to see if they want to join. I’ll have information letters for those students who attend to take home.

SENIOR CHOIR is for students in grades 4, 5 & 6. Practice is held twice a week at lunch recess on Days 3 & 5. Our first practice will be Tuesday Jan 16. I’ll have information letters for those students who attend to take home.

Diversity, Equity and Community

Actor, athlete and activist, Jesse Lipscombe, #makeitawkward, recently spoke to students in grades 6-9 on the topic of diversity and equity. His message about diversity included how to “make it awkward” for comments, jokes and language use aimed at minority groups and marginalized people in our community. He spoke to our students about the power of their words and the power each of us have as individuals to change the world and work to end systemic racism. He gave our students three strategies to use when encountering racist/sexist/prejudice language/jokes/comments in our community:

1. Why, why, why?
2. Befriend
3. Get the lettuce out

Ask your child who attended the presentation to tell you more.

One of Copperhaven’s priority areas is to create an environment that welcomes diversity and creates a strong sense of community at Copperhaven School. As one step towards achieving that, our school is working on a project for our front entryway to welcome everyone to our school community. We are hoping that you might be able to help.

If your family speaks a language other than or in addition to French or English in the home, please share with us how you say HELLO and WELCOME in that language by completing the attached [GOOGLE FORM](#). Thank you so much for sharing with us!

Update from your Parent Council

We hope everyone had a wonderful holiday break. We wanted to provide some updates on the things we have been busy working on in 2023 and into 2024.

Staff Appreciation Committee: A big thank you to our staff appreciation committee who provided pizza lunch in November and organized and delivered homemade treat boxes for all 57 staff members before winter break. Thank you Copperhaven staff for all the amazing things you do, we are so grateful for your ongoing dedication to our children! Notes of appreciation to staff can be submitted here: <https://bit.ly/copperhavenstaff>

Playground Committee: Our playground committee has been busy this past year! We met with a playground designer over the summer and created a preliminary design which we presented at the open house in September. Thank you to everyone who offered feedback at the open house! We continue to finalize this design and are hopeful to propose a phased approach to PSD for a large, new playground in the near future. This playground comes with a large price tag and will require grants and ongoing fundraising efforts. We are hopeful to see this phased construction begin in 3-5 years depending on funding and estimate a cost of approximately \$275,000. While we continue to work on the large playground design we have some additional updates to share. A second gaga pit has arrived thanks in part to a very generous donor and TBRA at a cost of \$6,000. We are currently awaiting installation by PSD. An application was submitted by the school for a Trees Canada grant (\$10,000) to plant several trees in the back field and are eagerly awaiting to hear about the application. Our committee recently proposed to PSD an expansion to the existing park to add on a large Zoom Twist play structure funded by TBRA at a cost of \$56,000. If approved we hope to have this installed this upcoming summer.

Events Committee: we are working to finalize the dates on some exciting events to take us through the rest of the year. This includes a family dance and culture week events. Stay tuned for announcements soon.

Volunteers Needed: We are looking for parents/grandparents/community members who may be interested in leading lunchtime groups at Copperhaven. Some examples of these groups could include: knitting/crocheting, crib/card games, beading or crafting. Please reach out if you may be interested in volunteering.

School Council meets monthly in the school library and would love for you to join us! Please reach out if you have any questions.

Sheila, Amy, Chantelle and Pam

The Boundary Ridge Association (TBRA)

We hope everyone enjoyed their time off and is excited to be back. TBRA recently purchased and donated some new mini stick nets for student use at recess and to replace the "well used" ones they had been using for the past few years. A proposal for an addition to the Copperhaven playground has been submitted to the Facilities Department of Parkland School Division for input and approval. We are looking forward to using some of the funds generated from several years of hard work and volunteer hours.

If you have any questions for the TBRA or are interested in joining a meeting, please email us at theboundaryridge@gmail.com or message us through Facebook.

Sean, Pam, Amy, and Amanda

Counsellor's Corner: Gaming and Kids' Mental Health

From games designed for apps and websites to classic video game systems, there are now games that are fun and appealing for almost all ages, from toddlers to teens. How does all this gaming impact children's mental health and development? The risk and benefits depend on the type of game, how it's used, and on the individual.

Risks and Benefits of Gaming on Kids' Mental Health

Most people who have played a fun game can understand how appealing it is, especially to kids. As games have become more complex, they can create a sense of urgency to make it to the next level, to solve the next problem... or to just do a little bit more.

The age and maturity of a child can have a big impact on the risks and benefits, so realize that deciding what games are appropriate is highly individual. Download our plan to help you think through what makes sense.

All video games contain a rating from the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) to help you understand a game's intended audience and appropriateness. Caregivers can also check out the interactive tool from [common sense media](#) which allows you to enter a child's age, gaming system, and limits on particular content in games (including violence or sexual content) to see if a game would be appropriate for their child (an account is required).

Risks of Gaming

- Children play less outside than ever. [Screen time](#), including time spent playing games, may contribute to keeping kids indoors or moving their bodies less. And we know that time spent outside and physical movement improves mental well-being.
- Violent video games may increase aggression and decrease empathy, especially in kids and teens who play for many hours. Aggressive video game playing has also been associated with increased aggression in children's friends. Even if your child doesn't necessarily play violent video games but their friends do, caregivers may see some increased aggression in their child.
- According to research, children who spend a lot of time gaming develop [fewer relationships](#) with their peers.

Keep in mind that each kid is different and how they use video games is also different. "Too many hours" can be different for different kids. What is important is that we monitor and keep track of mood and behavior changes as caregivers.

Benefits of Gaming

- Online gaming may help children find a community where they feel like they [belong](#), which is a protective factor that helps mental health. Positive relationships with peers can help boost kids' self-esteem and happiness levels and may lower the risk of depression and anxiety.
- Playing cooperative (where two or more players are working together towards a common goal) or action-adventure video games may help children develop impulse control and problem-solving abilities.
- Based on research, there are some games that may improve fine-motor coordination, reaction times and persistence.

Research into the impact of video games and online gaming on children is being published all the time. New games and platforms are coming out faster than ever! Caregivers play an important role in monitoring and setting limits on games.

Talking to Kids about Gaming

Having a conversation about online and video games is a good place to start. Use the acronym GAME to help you get started:

G - Get a realistic idea of your own screen/game time

Before talking with a child in your life, consider how much time you spend on screens (gaming, social media, watching shows, etc.). Children often model the behavior of adults they are around, including types of games played and how much time is spent on them. How important is screen/game time to you? Why? How do you feel like your habits are impacting your mental health?

A – Ask questions

This will help you connect with your child and understand them better. It also gives you a better sense of how games are impacting their mental health and behavior. Ask your child questions like:

- What games do you like to play? Why?
- Who do you connect with while you're playing those games?
- What are you learning from the games you like to play?

M – Monitor their gaming

Young children may not realize how much time they are spending on games. Kids of all ages may not be aware of who all is in the game with them or that they shouldn't share personal details with people online. As a caregiver, consider:

- Is this impacting their schoolwork, friendships or health?
- Have you noticed any changes in their behavior, things like increased irritability, anger or avoiding friends, during or after playing certain games? These changes may mean talking more about those reactions.

E – Establish limits

Kids thrive on limits, though they won't often ask you for them. Make a family gaming plan.

- What kinds of games do you embrace as a family?
- How much time are you willing to spend on gaming?
- Who are the people you can interact with while playing?
- What needs to be done first?

Kids will likely push the limits of your Family Gaming Plan. You'll need to have clear consequences and be ready to enforce those. You'll want to provide praise and acknowledge when your child is keeping to the limits that you've set. Share with your child how that builds

trust and may lead them to be given additional privileges. If they don't keep to the plan, you'll have to reduce or take away their privileges or have a different consequence.

When Should I Be Concerned

If your child mentions concerning behavior from another player while gaming, you may need to step in. Seeing any major behavioral changes (such as becoming more aggressive, withdrawing from friends or having difficulty controlling their emotions) during or immediately after a game would be reason to talk to them. Also look for decreased academic performance or impacts on physical health (such as weight gain or back/neck pain caused by poor posture during gaming). If problems continue over several days or weeks, seek help from your pediatrician or from a mental health professional.

Resources and References

American Academy of Pediatrics. [Screen Time Guidelines](#). American Academy of Pediatrics. Accessed December 2023.

common sense media. [Are Some Types of Screens Better Than Others?](#) common sense media. Accessed December 2023.

Larouche R. Kleinfeld M. Charles Rodriguez U. Hatten C. Hecker V. Scott DR. Brown LM. Onyeso OK. Sadia F. Shimamura H. [Determinants of Outdoor Time in Children and Youth: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal and Intervention Studies](#). Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2023 Jan 11;20(2):1328.

Lobel A. Engels RCME. Stone LL. et al. Video Gaming and Children's Psychosocial Wellbeing: A Longitudinal Study. J Youth Adolescence 46, 884–897 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0646-z>

National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2022, October 24. [Video gaming may be associated with better cognitive performance in children](#). NIDA. Accessed December 2023.

Greitemeyer T. [The contagious impact of playing violent video games on aggression: Longitudinal evidence](#). Aggress Behav. 2019 Nov;45(6):635-642. doi: 10.1002/ab.21857. Epub 2019 Aug 13.