

Hastings-on-Hudson Public Schools



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Dear Hastings Families,

Many school leaders across the nation are reaching out to families and community members to request assistance with a new social media problem. I am writing to all Hastings families with a version of a letter sent last week by Dr. Joseph Ricca, Superintendent of the White Plains Public Schools. While this letter is sent to all families, it is especially important for families with middle and high school students.

Our shared problem is the recent “challenges” posted on the social media app TikTok, which are encouraging children to perform disruptive, inappropriate, and even illegal acts, in or around their schools. The challenge began with vandalizing school property in September and has moved on to challenging students to assault teachers/staff members during the month of October.

Regardless if your children are on social media, they likely will hear about TikTok’s viral challenge. Please speak with your child (especially middle and high school) about proper behavior within school. This is an opportunity to talk about using technology appropriately, being socially responsible and standing-up for kindness.

To underscore the seriousness of the TikTok challenges, we must understand that the encouraged behaviors are illegal. So we all know the issues, the following was posted to TikTok (listed below with the policy and legal violation in parentheses):

- September: Vandalize school bathrooms (Vandalism)
- October: Smack a Teacher/Staff member (Assault)
- November: Kiss your friend’s girlfriend at school (Sexual Assault)
- December: “Deck the halls and show your b***” (Indecent Exposure/Possible Sexual Assault)
- January: Jab a breast (Sexual Assault)
- February: Mess up school signs (Vandalism)
- March: Make a mess in the courtyard or cafeteria (Vandalism)
- April: “Grab some eggs” (*another stealing challenge*) (Theft)

- May: Ditch day (Truancy)
- June: Flip off in the front office (Disrespectful Behavior)
- July: Spray a neighbor's fence (Assault)

We must consider the acts associated with the “challenge” to be violations of school district policy, which carry severe consequences for students who may perform these acts. We cannot consider any of these behaviors as jokes, pranks, misunderstandings or just students playing around. Therefore, any student involved in this act could face in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and possible legal action.

Thank you for helping to make certain our children understand the severity of this situation. Let's continue to work together to ensure that our school district never has to address this type of behavior.

Please be in touch with your school principal if you have any questions.

Be well.

Bill

William S. McKersie, Ph.D.
Interim Superintendent of Schools