



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

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Contact Person:

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TO: All Principals

FROM: Judith Klinek, Chief Academic Officer *JK*

SUBJECT: MINIMIZING RISKY BEHAVIORS THAT IMPACT HEALTH IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

**ACTION BY:
Information Only**

An increasing number of incident reports have brought national attention to several behaviors that are creating serious health risks for students. The behaviors identified below have been noted in all grade levels and require awareness of the dangers they pose to the health and safety of our students.

- ❖ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have instructed all public health entities to increase surveillance of “strangulation” activities commonly referred to as “choking games.” This activity, characterized by self or assisted strangulation to produce euphoria through brief hypoxia to the brain, can cause death and/or long term disability to anyone engaged in the practice. Common names used for this risky behavior are “Knock Out,” “Space Monkey,” “Flatlining,” and/or “The Fainting Game.”
 - Educators, counselors, school nurses, and parents/guardians should be aware of these activities and the following signs of participation: bloodshot eyes; marks on the neck; frequent, severe headaches; disorientation after spending time alone; and ropes, scarves, and belts tied to furniture/doorknobs.
- ❖ The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has identified that high-powered magnets can trigger a significant safety risk to children and youth. These magnets, that are small enough to be swallowed, can cause damage to the stomach and intestines requiring surgical intervention and even death.
 - Educators, counselors, school nurses, and parents/guardians should be aware of the dangers associated with these magnets and that they may be misused by teenagers to mimic body piercings of the ear lobes, tongue, and nose. Magnets with product names such as “Buckyballs” and “Nanospheres” may be unintentionally swallowed and medical attention should be sought immediately. Students reporting abdominal symptoms of pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea should be screened for possible ingestion of these magnets and referred to medical care.

- ❖ Recent news media coverage of a possible student death due to “hazing” brings back into focus inappropriate social behaviors increasingly reported in our middle and high schools as well as college campuses. Florida Statute 1006.135, which prohibits “hazing,” defines it to mean any action or situation that recklessly or intentionally endangers a student for purposes of initiation, admission, or affiliation with any organization operating under the sanction of a school.
 - Educators, counselors, school nurses, and parents/guardians should be aware that hazing activities can cause physical injuries, poor grades, abusive behavior, and difficulty eating, sleeping, or concentrating. Hazing can lead to feelings of confusion, anger, guilt, and embarrassment. Schools can help parents and students by clearly defining anti-hazing rules and provide opportunities to talk about appropriate behaviors.

The following resources are available concerning these health risks. Please discuss these issues with your staff to both identify and minimize risky behaviors that can lead to severe health-related consequences.

Additional Resources:

“Choking Game”

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5901a1.htm>

High-Powered Magnets

<http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PREREL/prhtml12/12037.html>

“Hazing”

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1006/Sections/1006.135.html

http://www.educationworld.com/a_issues/issues123.shtml

EWG/JK/KO/KCW/cb:gv

Approved: _____


E. Wayne Gent, Superintendent