



DR. MICHAEL J. MARTIRANO
Superintendent of Schools

St. Mary's County Public Schools

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February 6, 2012

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Last week, students from neighboring Charles County were taken to the hospital after holding their breath until they passed out. Local media ran stories on the incidents and referenced Facebook, You Tube, and other social media sites that detail how to play "Knockout" or "Pass Out Challenge."

The game is played by hyperventilating and then holding one's breath until passing out and has existed in some form for decades. It appears to be resurging due to recent postings on Facebook and You Tube. Playing the game is dangerous - as any activity that deprives the brain of oxygen has the potential to cause moderate to severe brain cell damage. Moreover, incidental, or indirect, injuries may arise from falling or uncontrolled movements.

We are asking parents to work with the school system to educate children about the dangers of these types of games and challenges and the possibility of severe health risks. Students participating in these challenges will face disciplinary actions for disruption of the school day and parents will be notified.

Principals at each of St. Mary's County's Public Schools will speak to their students tomorrow morning during announcements alerting them of the health risks of these challenges and the potential consequences of the behavior.

Parents who may have information to share or need more information can contact the Office of Student Services at 301-475-5511, x198.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Michael J. Martirano".

Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools