



WELLS-OGUNQUIT  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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December 17, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Recently the district was made aware of a copyright violation involving illegal sharing of a movie using peer-to-peer software and the district's network. We have taken the necessary steps to remedy the situation but wanted to use this opportunity to educate the rest of the school community about the dangers of using peer-to-peer software and violating digital copyright laws.

Peer-to-peer software such as *Bit Torrent*, *Frostwire*, and *Limewire* is not illegal to use but use opens your computer to unsafe situations. The file-sharing nature of the software gives other people access to the hard drive of your computer and can lead to the theft of personal information stored there such as financial, medical, or other records. There is also an increased chance of attack from spyware, adware, or other types of viruses that may compromise the performance of your computer and the data stored on it.

Peer-to-peer software is commonly used to share movies, music, and software. In most cases, this sharing is a violation of digital copyright law. When you purchase a movie on DVD or download music from *iTunes* or *Amazon*, you are paying for the right to enjoy the entertainment **for personal use** but **not** to share the content with others. Using services like *Bit Torrent*, *Frostwire*, or *Limewire* to share or receive movies, music, or software violates the digital copyright law and may carry a criminal penalty. Penalties may range up to \$150,000 plus legal fees for each song, movie, or piece of software.

It can be confusing to determine what is a violation of digital copyright law. For example, making a back up copy of a CD to play in your car is fine, but making a copy of a CD to give to a friend is a violation of copyright law. Renting a video to view in your house is fine, but making a copy of the rented video to view at a later time is a violation of copyright law. Using 30 seconds of a song in a slideshow for class is allowable, but using a song as part of a slideshow for a sports team which is then distributed to parents is a violation of copyright law. Understanding the difference between what is and is not legal is crucial. A good resource can be found at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/copyrightmystery/text/reading/>

As a parent/guardian you can take action to help prevent these dangers from affecting you. Discuss issues such as netiquette, copyright and privacy with your children and explain how common sense internet safety rules apply within peer to peer communities. Be aware what is on the computer(s) within your household because no matter who put it there you are held responsible. Make sure your computers are protected with anti-virus software that is up-to-date and scanning your computer on a regular basis.

If you have specific questions about this topic, please feel free to contact Michael Richards, WOCSD Collaborative Content Coach for Technology at [mrichards@wocsd.org](mailto:mrichards@wocsd.org)

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

*Elaine M. Tomaszewski*  
Elaine M. Tomaszewski, Superintendent

*Michael Richards*  
Michael Richards, CCC-Technology