YouTube executives reportedly mulling over removing all children's content from main site

Google executives are reportedly discussing whether to remove all children's videos from the site and have them exist solely on the standalone YouTube Kids app, according to a new *Wall Street Journal* report.

The move is being discussed within Google's executive unit, according to the *Journal*, with the idea to move every single piece of content starring children into YouTube Kids. The move would be the most aggressive change undertaken by Google to fight predatory behavior targeting children on the site. A YouTube spokesperson told *The Verge* the company considers "lots of ideas for improving YouTube and some remain just that – ideas."

Other employees at Google and YouTube are also reportedly asking executives to consider turning off a feature that automatically plays another video after the one you're watching is finished, according to the *Journal*. It's a direct response to numerous articles published over the last few months, including a recent investigation from *The New York Times*, that found both innocuous and predatory videos focused around children playing automatically. YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki has acknowledged the company's missteps over the last few weeks, the *Journal* adds, saying in an internal memo that some of those decisions were "disappointing and painful."

Moving every video featuring or starring children to YouTube's

Kids app would come with its own array of issues. Logistically, it's a nightmare: There are 500 hours of content uploaded to the platform every minute. The only way YouTube could actually pull off the seismic shift would be to drastically alter the platform's infrastructure since content starring children is woven into the fabric of YouTube's community. It's something that YouTube, and parent company Google, have the means to do, but it's unclear whether executives are willing to take that leap.

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Children's content includes some of the most popular videos and channels on YouTube, attracting billions of views and top advertisers. Family vloggers are some of the fastest growing channels. The greater creator community would also push back against the policy — a policy that opens the door to confusing questions. Take a creator like Jake Paul, who often vlogs with a four-year-old named Tidus. Would those vlogs no longer be allowed on the main site because Tidus is front and center, or are those acceptable because Paul is there?

YouTube Kids is dealing its own set of problems, too, which YouTube is still trying to combat. In 2015, just a few months after the app launched, a children's watchdog group discovered a series of disturbing videos that lived on the app, including graphic discussions about pornography and suicide, explicit sexual language in cartoons, and modeling unsafe behaviors like playing with lit matches.

Those problems continued into 2017, when a larger investigation dug into disturbing content floating around the app, and it's seemingly still a problem today. While YouTube Kids is arguably a safer app than the main site, moving videos over to the kid-focused platform doesn't solve the issues with problematic videos already making it through. YouTube's current attempts to protect children include disabling comment sections on videos that feature minors and disabling live-

streaming options for kids unless a parent or guardian is present.

A complete overhaul seems unlikely, but what's clear from the *Journal*'s report is that both Google and YouTube executives are putting forth a concentrated effort to try to solve one of several paramount problems afflicting the site.

https://www.theverge.com/2019/6/19/18691403/youtube-kids-content-predator-protection-app-google