

ENSURING STUDENT CYBER SAFETY

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTHY
FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

COMMITTEE ON

EDUCATION AND LABOR

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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ENSURING STUDENT CYBER SAFETY

Thursday, June 24, 2010

U.S. House of Representatives

Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities

Committee on Education and Labor

Washington, DC

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:05 a.m., in room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Carolyn McCarthy [chairwoman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives McCarthy, Clarke, Scott, Shea-Porter, Platts, Guthrie, and Thompson.

Staff Present: Andra Belknap, Press Assistant; Calla Brown, Staff Assistant, Education; Daniel Brown, Staff Assistant; Jose Garza, Deputy General Counsel; David Hartzler, Systems Administrator; Liz Hollis, Special Assistant to Staff Director/Deputy Staff Alex Nock, Deputy Staff Director; Director; Alexandria Ruiz, Administrative Assistant to Director of Education Policy; Melissa Salmanowitz, Press Secretary; Dray Thorne, Senior Systems Administrator; Bryce McKibben Staff Assistant, Education; Sadie Marshall, Chief Clerk; Kim Zarish-Becknell, Education Counsel, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities; Mark Zuckerman, Staff Director; Stephanie Arras, Minority Legislative Assistant; Kirk Boyle, Minority General Counsel; Barrett Karr, Minority Staff Director; Brian Newell, Minority Press Secretary; Susan Ross, Minority Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Mandy Schaumburg, Minority Education Policy Counsel; and Linda Stevens, Minority Chief Clerk/Assistant to the General Counsel.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. A quorum for taking testimony must be present by House and committee rule, two members constitute a quorum for this purpose. No bipartisan requirement, two members of the same party will suffice. A quorum is present for the hearing for the House Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities on Ensuring Student Cyber Safety will come to order.

Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to make sure that everybody has their BlackBerrys, their cell phones, put them on silent or turn them off, appreciate that.

Before we begin, without objection, the subcommittee is joined today by our colleague, Representative Judy Biggert, who will be here soon to participate in the hearing and to ask questions.

I now recognize myself, followed by the Healthy Families and Communities ranking member, Todd Platts. I would like to welcome our witnesses to this hearing on ensuring student cyber safety. As a nurse for over 30 years, I have seen firsthand the damage and the loss families can experience from bullying. The emerging world of cyber-bullying is taking a toll on our students in ways we couldn't even imagine just a few years ago. Traditional acts of bullying extend beyond the halls of our school buildings and have found a new home on the Internet. Through this hearing we will explore areas of concern related to cyber-bullying and how it is compounded by additional forms of bullying.

While the overwhelming number of our students are safe, it is a parent's worse nightmare to learn that their child has become a victim of crime or other incident. Acts of bullying can quickly escalate into cyber-bullying which, as we know, is far reaching and can lead to outbreaks of violence.

According to a February 2010 Pew report, 73 percent, 73 percent of wired American teens now use social networking Web sites. A significant increase from previous surveys.

Another recent Pew report found that daily text messaging among American teens has shot up in the past year and a half. Thirty-eight percent in February of 2008 to 54 percent in September 2009. It is not just frequency, teens are sending enormous quantities of text messaging every single day. Half of our teens send 50 or more text messages a day, and 1 in 3 more send more than 100 text messages a day.

For a parent, knowing your child has been a victim of any form of bullying can be heartbreaking. So too can learning that your child is a bully.

These days, cyber-bullying can have dire consequences, the emotional and physical impacts to cyber-bullying have become more severe than ever, and we need to be proactive in dealing with this serious problem. Students cannot learn and teachers cannot teach in environments that are unsafe and frightening. Students ought to be able to focus on learning and gaining the tools they need to succeed in life, not worrying about physical or emotional violence.

Another theme that I think is important that you will hear running throughout this hearing is that effective cyber safety efforts must include coordination between all interested parties, especially the students. The students know what is happening to them and to their peers and often way before adults do. They are critical partners in any cyber safety efforts. I look forward to hearing ideas on this. Students' cyber safety is necessary for a successful academic career.

We cannot legislate morality, nor insist on kindness and we cannot criminalize meanness. Awareness and education hold the key to any solution. As the committee continues our work on reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act we must give serious consideration to the testimony before us today and determine how Congress can best move forward to prevent further tragedies.

I want to thank you all for being here, and I look forward to your testimony. I now recognize the distinguished ranking member of

the Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee, Mr. Platts, for his opening statement.

[The statement of Mrs. McCarthy follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Carolyn McCarthy, Chairwoman,
Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities**

I'd like to welcome our witnesses to this hearing on ensuring student cyber safety. As a nurse for over 30 years, I have seen firsthand the damage and loss families can experience from bullying.

The emerging world of cyber bullying is taking a toll on our students in ways we didn't imagine just a few years ago.

Traditional acts of bullying extend beyond the halls of our school buildings and have found a new home on the internet.

Through this hearing we will explore areas of concern related to cyber bullying and how it is intertwined with and compounded by traditional forms of bullying.

While the overwhelming number of students are safe, it is a parent's worst nightmare to learn their child has become the victim of a crime or other incident.

Acts of bullying can quickly escalate into cyber bullying which, as we know is far reaching and can lead to outbreaks of violence.

According to a February 2010 PEW report, 73% of wired American teens now use social networking websites, a significant increase from previous surveys.

Another recent PEW report found that daily text messaging among American teens has shot up in the past year and a half, from 38% in February of 2008 to 54% in September 2009.

And it's not just frequency—teens are sending enormous quantities of text messages a day.

Half of teens send 50 or more text messages a day, and one in three send more than one hundred texts a day.

As a parent, knowing your child has been the victim of any form of bullying can be heartbreaking, so too can learning that your child is a bully.

These days, cyber bullying can have dire consequences.

The emotional and physical impacts of cyber bullying have become more severe than ever and we need to be proactive in dealing with this serious problem.

Students cannot learn and teachers cannot teach in environments that are unsafe and frightening.

Students ought to be able to focus on learning and gaining the tools they need to succeed in life, not worrying about physical or emotional violence.

Another theme that I think is important and that you will hear running through this hearing is that effective cyber safety efforts must include coordination between all interested parties, especially the students.

The students know what's happening to them and to their peers, and often before adults do.

They are critical partners in any cyber safety efforts and I look forward to hearing ideas on this.

Student cyber safety is necessary for a successful academic career.

We cannot legislate morality, nor insist on kindness, and we cannot criminalize meanness.

Awareness and education hold the key to any solution.

As the Committee continues our work on reauthorizing ESEA, we must give serious consideration to the testimony we have heard today and determine how Congress can best move forward to prevent further tragedies.

Thank you all for being here and I look forward to your testimony.

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning and welcome to our witnesses and all of our guests here today. Today we join together to discuss the important issue of cyber safety issue related to our Nation's children. As a parent of two school age children, and I am delighted to have my soon to be 6th grader middle schooler, my son Tom just 11 this spring, with me. He will keep me in line if I misbehave, I think. But as a parent of two school age children, the issue of cyber-bullying is very troubling and certainly very personal as a parent. With the growth of technology that has included social networking sites, instant messaging, and

texts and picture messaging on cell phones, bullying is no longer combined to brick and mortar classrooms or school playgrounds or after-school bus rides. With children growing dependence on computer technology and other forms of technology, it is ever important that we address the changing face of bullying one often anonymous.

Given how rapidly technology changes, the frequency of cyber-bullying is not easily determined. However, certain studies have shown that up to 53 percent of kids are victims of cyber-bullying, and up to 23 percent of children have committed a bullying act through the use of technology.

Most importantly, as parents, we must make it our priority to be cognizant of what our children are doing on line and to equip them with the proper tools to identify, report and effectively react to instances of cyber-bullying.

The most severe cases, such as Vermont teenager Ryan Patrick Halligan, who committed suicide as a result of persistent abuse on line by classmates who questioned his sexuality, and 15-year-old Phoebe Prince, who earlier this year also took her own life after relentless bullying about her peers are heart wrenching reminders of why our Nation must become better educated on cyber-bullying and better prepared, or helping our children become better prepared with this issue.

Fortunately, action is being taken nationwide by school administrators, teachers, parents, students, non profit organizations and the technology industry itself, all are working on developing both innovative and practical approaches to identify, prevent and curb the prevalence of cyber-bullying. As such, I very much look forward to the testimony of all of our witnesses.

I want to especially pay tribute to our Girl Scout Dominique, we are delighted to have you here to have representing the Scouting program and your peer group, because it is your peers that we are trying to do right by and those to come. So again, we appreciate all of you being here and being part of this hearing. With that, I yield back, Madam Chair.

[The statement of Mr. Platts follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Todd Russell Platts, Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities

Good morning. Welcome to our hearing. Today we have joined to discuss the important issue of cyber safety related to our Nation's children.

As a parent of two school-age children, the issue of cyber bullying is one that is both troubling and personal. With the growth of technology that has included social networking sites, instant messaging, and text and picture messaging on cell phones, bullying is no longer confined to brick and mortar classrooms and afterschool bus rides. With children's growing dependence on computer technology, it is ever important that we address the changing face of bullying—one that is often anonymous.

Given how rapidly technology changes, its frequency is hard to determine. However, certain have studies have shown that up to fifty-three percent of kids are victims of cyber bullying, and up to twenty-three percent of children have committed a bullying act through the use of technology.

Most importantly, as parents, we must make it our priority to be cognizant of what our children are doing online and equip them with proper tools to identify, report, and effectively react to instances of cyber bullying.

The most sever cases, like Vermont teenager Ryan Patrick Halligan, who committed suicide as a result of persistent abuse online by classmates who questioned his sexuality, and fifteen-year old Phoebe Prince who earlier this year also took her own life after relentless bullying by her peers are heart wrenching reminders of why our Nation must become educated on cyber bullying.

Fortunately, action is being taken nationwide by school administrators, teachers, parents, students, nonprofit organizations, and the technology industry itself. All are working on developing both innovative and practical approaches to identify, prevent and curb the prevalence of cyber bullying. As such, I very much look forward to hearing the testimony from our esteemed witnesses today. Thank you Chairwoman McCarthy, and I yield back.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you, Mr. Platts and thank you for your opening statement.

Pursuant to committee rule 12(a), any member may submit an opening statement in writing at this time which will be made part of the permanent record. Without objection, all members will have 14 days to submit additional materials of questions for the hearing record.

I want to just explain the lighting system that we have in front of you. When you start speaking, you will see a green light that basically gives you 5 minutes. You will see a yellow light, that is kind of a warning. We don't cut people off in the middle of their statements or anything like that and to be very honest with you, I am probably more of a lenient chairman because you all have come from all over the country and we appreciate what you are hearing—what we will be hearing. So when I give a little tap, if you could finish your statement up, I would appreciate it.

Our first witness is Dr. Phil C. McGraw, someone who we all know as simply Dr. Phil. Dr. Phil is the host of the Dr. Phil Show and is the best selling author with six of his books going to number 1 on the New York Times best seller list. Dr. Phil holds a PA from Midwestern State University and an MA and Ph.D. in clinical psychology from North Texas State University, with a dual area of emphasis in clinical and behavioral medicine.

On his syndicated show, he has focused on the issue of cyber-bullying numerous times and has been called upon by the media as an expert voice, raising public awareness on this issue. I welcome you, Dr. Phil, and thank you for gracing us with your testimony.

On our second witness is Ms. Dominique Napolitano—I have learning disabilities by the way, just so people know that and I'm not ashamed to say that I have that because I know a lot of young people have it and I think they should be encouraged to do what they can anyhow. Dominique is a rising junior at St. John the Baptist High School and was among a core group of Girl Scouts who helped develop Let Me Know, LMK, a leading on line safety Web site developed by Girl Scouts in cooperation with Microsoft Windows division. The site is unique because it is designed to cover such topics as cyber-bullying, on-line sexual predators, cyber security from the perspective of young people. Welcome, and I want to thank the Girl Scouts of America for leading us to you. And I thank the Girl Scouts of America for the work that they have done over the years on addressing cyber-bullying for their young ladies.

Our third witness is Dr. Jorge Srabstein, he is a child psychiatrist, at Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C. At Children's Hospital, he is the medical director of the clinic for health problems related to bullying. He is an emeritus fellow of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the American Academy of Pediatrics, and a distinguished fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and clinical associate professor of psychiatry at

George Washington University School of Medicine. Welcome, Doctor.

Our next witness who came all the way from London this morning is Barbara Paris, principal of Canyon Vista Middle School in Austin, Texas. Ms. Paris has been in public education for 30 years. Educated both in Europe and the U.S., she has been served as a teacher in grades pre K through 12, and as a principal at the secondary level. Currently serving as the past president of the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals, Ms. Paris has recently taken up office on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Our next witness is Ms. Parry Aftab, executive director of WiredSafety. She is an attorney who has represented many of the entertainment, Internet and consumer industry. She recently founded Wire Trust, a risk management consulting firm to advise industry and policymakers and an award winning columnist for Information Week Magazine.

Finally, we will hear from David Finnegan, welcome, the “Chief Information and Logistics Bear” of Build-A-Bear Workshop. Mr. Finnegan joined Build-A-Bear Workshop in December 1999 and we will hear from him the efforts of Build A Bear to educate kids and parents about cyber-bullying using a multiple of media for parents that may or may not be Internet savvy.

I want to welcome all of our witnesses, and again, I thank you for the time that you have taken out of your busy lives so with that, Dr. Phil.

STATEMENT OF DR. PHIL MCGRAW, SYNDICATED DAYTIME TELEVISION TALK SHOW HOST AND BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

Mr. MCGRAW. Thank you. Madam Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts, members of the committee, I am really honored—

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Um—yes.

Mr. MCGRAW. Am I on now?

Madam Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts, Members of the subcommittee I am really honored and delighted to speak about this because it is something that I am very passionate about, and I really hope that we will have cyber-bullying language added to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The times they are a changing, as we say in the south. When I grew up as a boy, all of our fantasies were about the Wild Wild West and everybody running around and gun slingers everywhere with no law west of the Pecos. Now we are dealing with the wild, wild Web. And the gun slingers are keyboard bullies. They are these people that can, with anonymity, attack other students in a way that can completely destroy their reputations. And it is something that has changed and we have to change with it.

In the past, you know, the bully had size, they had words, they could intimidate someone at school, but as Representative Platts comments with MySpace and Facebook, e-mails, chat rooms, there are so many of these things with so much power that they constitute Weapons of Mass Destruction when it comes to communication with these kids. And the problem is the bullies are anonymous now. So you get even more aggression from them because they

don't have to look their target in the eye. And this wild, wild Web is completely unbridled. There is no checks, there is no balances, there is no accountability. Even if they are caught, there are little consequences.

And when I grew up, I suspect when a lot of you grew up, bullying took place by people writing on the bathroom wall or snickering behind somebody's back. And even then you could move schools if necessary. Somebody could say I just don't want to put up with this anymore, I am going to move schools. You can't do that now. Even if you leave, the bullies and you go to another school, all they have to do is Google that person's name and here it comes again.

If there was a rumor she stuffed her bra in the 5th grade or somebody wet their pants at lunch, something that happened that really was humiliating and embarrassing, they pick it up at the new school and here we go again. They photoshop pictures in humiliating poses, ways that can just be so traumatic to a child. And believe me, it is impossible to unring the cyber bell, you just cannot unring that bell. Once it is out there, it is out there. And children that have been impacted by cyber-bullying are 1.9 times more likely to attempt suicide than the general population. We have seen it. Phoebe Prince, Alexis Pilkington, Megan Meier, on and on.

I get tens of thousands of letters at the Dr. Phil Show of kids asking for help about this. It is a serious crisis. Forty-two percent of kids say they have been bullied on the Internet. Thirty-five percent say they have actually been threatened. And it is more for minorities, gays, and particularly girls. This is an epidemic and the problem is there is no place to hide. You know, used to, at least when the child got home, they would be around people who loved and care about them and they would be safe at home.

Now that bully can silently come inside the home. You think your child is back doing their homework, but on their desktop or their laptop they are getting bombarded by these people that are saying ugly things about them, telling them they wish they would kill themselves and they are going to beat them up the next day. Isolation is the number 1 tool of an abuser. And you can never be more isolated than when someone is cyber-bullying you and you alone with that screen are looking at everything that is being said.

Children won't talk to their parents about this, they feel shame and embarrassment. They don't want to tell mom and dad, hey, people don't like me so parents don't necessarily know it. Eighty-five percent of the time this goes completely unabated because there is no official crime. We have to give educators, administrators, teachers the tools that they need to prevent this, to intervene once it happens, to break the pattern and both the bullies and of the targets need counseling.

The bullies don't understand the gravity of what they are doing, they just simply don't get that. So we have to help them understand, develop empathy to realize when I do this, it is destroying someone's life.

I see so many people in their 20s, 30s and 40s that were bullied, it still affects them. It affects the way they parent their children, it leaves scars that run deep. It may end in the 7th grade, but the

residual is there for the rest of their life. And I really hope we add language to address cyber-bullying to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act because teachers in particular are dedicated professionals. Look, you don't go into teaching for the money, you go into teaching because you care.

You go into teaching because you want to impact young people's lives. We need to give them the tools to do that, and I am so proud that the committees starting what I think is a long overdue dialogue about this, so we can give them the tools that they need. And frankly, all of us adults aren't nearly as literate on the computer as our kids are. We need to close that information gap. We need to Google our children's names. We need to know where their name pops up, who is talking to them, what they are saying and how they are doing it.

I am so convinced that by putting this language in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we can raise the awareness and give these people the tools to bring this about. And I want to tell you that I am going to continue to focus on this on my platform, and I invite everyone in the media to use their platform to raise awareness about this, to educate parents about this and put them on alert. So I commend you all for taking the time to do this. Thank you very much.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you very much.

[The statement of Mr. McGraw follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Phillip C. McGraw, Ph.D., Syndicated Daytime
Television Talk Show Host and Best-Selling Author**

Good morning.

Madam Chairwoman McCarthy, members of the Committee I am honored to speak to you about Cyber-bullying which I pray will be added to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The "times they are a changing". As a boy growing up in Texas and Oklahoma, our fantasies were inspired by tales of the Wild Wild West. It was indeed a wild era when there literally was "no law west of the Pecos"—when gunslingers like Black Bart and Billy the Kid freely roamed the countryside, terrorizing law abiding citizens. They were unchecked and unaccountable, the bullies of a time gone by.

My personal heroes were not the villains, but the marshals! The guys in the white hats—men like Matt Dillon and Pat Garrison who did what they could to stop the outlaws' random, brutal attacks on innocent victims.

Today, we have a new frontier—a new "Wild Wild West". It's called the "Wild Wild Web", and it can be a very dangerous place, especially for our children. The gunslingers of the Wild Wild Web are what are called cyber-bullies or Keyboard Bullies—omnipresent, electronic stalkers who can and do go after their targets day and night, destroying their reputations if not their lives, and then logging off their computers and riding away.

In the past a bully had physical size and words. Now the cyber-bully has Facebook, MySpace, Email, Texting, Web Postings, Blocked calling via the Internet, Instant Messaging, and chat rooms. Each has so much power and affect so many that they represent the Weapons of Mass Destruction of human communication for students! When students are sitting in class most of them at the junior high or middle school level will have cell phones with text capability. While a teacher may be lecturing about English literature or supervising a test, several students in the class will be texting each other and their friends. There will be cyber-bullies at work during this time causing clear and unknown danger to those very students in class. It is an epidemic in which it is easy to be a bully because a bully remains anonymous.

Like the old west, the Wild Wild Web is completely unbridled—with no checks, no balances, no accountability and no liability. There are seldom if ever, consequences for cyber-bullies' actions and little punishment even if they are identified—which is not an easy task. We need a new group of marshals, men and women in white hats, to once again keep our kids safe.

Let me try to capture the scope of this crisis. When I grew up—when most of you on the panel grew up—there were few if any home computers, few if any cell phones, certainly no texting, no Facebook or MySpace. Bullying was limited to school playgrounds and lunch rooms. Insults were scrawled on a bathroom wall.

But in 2010, the havoc caused by cyber-bullies is exponentially greater than what ever used to happen on a playground or was written on a bathroom wall. Today, through the cloak of anonymity, a cyber-bully can hack into a student's Facebook page, access their Twitter account, alter their My Space page or steal their email accounts. A cyber-bully can post changes to a Facebook page, making it appear the owner of the Facebook page has a sexually transmitted disease. A cyber-bully can create fake photos of an unsuspecting teenager in what appears to be a very sexually humiliating situation. A cyber-bully can invent shockingly embarrassing emails from one child and have them sent to someone else. By using dozens of false identities on social networking sites, a cyber-bully also can make his victim feel that legions of other kids despise him or her as well.

In a matter of seconds, a cyber-bully can completely destroy a fragile adolescent's reputation. While a bully's rumors in the 1980s might have reached twenty people, a cyber-bully's rumors will reach millions. While whatever was written on that wall in the old days could be erased, the Internet and all of its social networking sites can not. It is impossible to un-ring the "cyber-bell." Drs. Patchin and Hinduja found that all forms of bullying lead to increases in suicidal thoughts and victims of cyber-bullying were 1.9 times more likely to actually attempt suicide than non victims.

Members of the committee, we are facing a serious crisis. According to one study I've read, 42% of kids say they have been bullied while online. 35% say they have been threatened online. The National Crime Prevention Council reports that at least once per week, 52% of all students read some sort of cyber-bullying message directed at someone else. Much of the abuse is directed at racial and ethnic minorities, gays, Hispanics—and girls are more often the target than boys.

And what makes it worse for these victims is that there is absolutely no place for them to hide. Think about it. In the old days, kids got away from their bullies by retreating to the safety of their own homes. If the bullies followed them, you as parents would walk out the front door, take down their names, chase them away, and call their own parents. Not anymore. Today's child can be sitting in his own house, doing homework in his bedroom, reading, relaxing, or watching television—just being a kid. Suddenly, and relentlessly, he or she starts getting emails that say, "You're ugly." "No one likes you." "We are going to beat you up tomorrow." "We all wish you would just die." "No one wants you here, so why don't you just kill yourself?" Even while in the company of their parents, sitting with them in the den, the children can be attacked via their cell phone with text messages. Cyber-bullies will strike at anytime, and they will follow their targets everywhere—not only into their homes, but from school to school, even across the country. In almost every case of abuse, no matter what kind of abuse it is, isolation is the abuser's #1 tool. The abuser does everything possible to make a victim feel there is nothing that he or she can do to escape. When it comes to cyber-abuse, there is especially no escape.

I have addressed this issue on the "Dr. Phil" show because I have seen the torment it causes. Some victims suffer in silence and some experience symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Some decompensate and actually lose touch with reality. Their grades drop because they are afraid to go to school.

Their friends disappear. Because of the shame and embarrassment they feel from the cyber-bullying, they often won't say anything to a parent or any other authority figure. They become even more humiliated—and yes, more isolated—as the cyber-bullying continues for weeks, months and even years. Eventually, some of these children become so distraught that they do the unthinkable. According to the Cyber-bullying Research Center, cyber-bullying victims are almost twice as likely to attempt suicide compared to those who have not endured such bullying. You probably know about 15-year-old Phoebe Prince, the Massachusetts teenager who, after being harassed, mistreated and then cyber-bullied for three months by a group of other girls, hanged herself in a bedroom closet. 17-year-old Long Island teen Alexis Pilkington, the soccer star and daughter of a New York City police officer also took her own life following vicious taunts on social networking sites. 13-year-old Megan Meier committed suicide after receiving hateful messages from what she thought was a boyfriend—but who reportedly turned out to be the vengeful mother of a classmate.

But there are just as many stories we are asked to help with at the "Dr. Phil" show that never make the front pages—like the 11-year-old boy in Massachusetts who hanged himself after a group of kids ganged up on him, using the Internet to spread false rumors that he was gay. Or the 13-year-old girl in Florida who took

her own life after learning, to her horror, that kids at her school were posting a revealing photo of her on social networking sites.

Just as shocking are the studies that show how little is done about what is happening. It is estimated that 85 percent of bullying today goes on unabated. Because cyber-abuse almost always happens off campus, teachers and school administrators say they have no power to intervene. Because no “official crime” has been committed, the police say there is nothing they can do. And, sadly, parents are almost never aware of what is happening.

Times have changed the challenges we face—and we as a society have to change with them. We must change our sensitivities, our policies and our training protocols so we do not let the victims of today’s “keyboard bullies” fall through the cracks. That is why I am here today to suggest you add language to address cyber-bullying to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. A cyber bully in 2010 has the weapons to cause pain and suffering to victims that no other generation has had to cope with. Cyber-bullies need to be blocked. It is time to lay the foundation to protect our children during those critical hours when we are not there to personally supervise their lives and interactions. This Committee has an opportunity to enact legislation to add language to ESEA on cyber-bullying. By doing so you, will make meaningful changes in the lives of millions of children and adolescents who instead of suffering in silence may someday become our future leaders.

On the “Dr. Phil” show, we have taken the lead in dealing with cyber-bullying through intervention, education and prevention. These three principles must be kept in mind if we truly desire a meaningful outcome to stop the emotional carnage created by this ubiquitous problem. It is important for school officials to think comprehensively about how to address cyber safety and early prevention, how to address incidents that occur, and how to handle ongoing chronic situations. We can address the problem through our website with resources for parents and students dealing with cyber-bullying.

I am glad the subcommittee is holding today’s hearing because I believe it begins a long-overdue conversation about what cyber-bullying is doing to us. I have been saying, over and over, that we have got to start talking openly about this issue. The worst thing parents can do is to shrug and stay out of their kids’ on-line life, thinking that some texting or social network posting can’t really be all that serious. They need to ask their children directly if they have ever been ridiculed, intimidated or humiliated on the Internet. They need to let their children know that they do not have to feel isolated and alone because of any cyber-bullying that they have to endure. They need to assure their children that they will do everything they can to protect them and to fight for them.

They also must get very involved in their children’s high-tech lives. The fact is that most parents today are fractionally computer literate. They don’t know what’s coming across their kids’ computers or phones. Even those who try to limit or supervise their children’s time on line do not understand that video games now have Internet capability.

If the adults in a child’s life are not aware of cyber-bullying, the bullying will not go away. Which is why I believe that all parents who are not familiar with the Internet need to get familiar with the Internet immediately. Their own children may be their best resources. Here is just a sampling of what parents can do:

- Have their children take them to the sites they frequently visit and to show them what they do on those sites.
- Have their children show them what they have in their profiles on social networking sites to make sure it is accurate and appropriate.
- Scrutinize their children’s “friends lists” on their various accounts and make sure they recognize the identity of each “friend.”
- Make certain their children have never and will never share their passwords with anyone, even a friend, to avoid the risk of someone impersonating them.
- Encourage school-aged children to change their password regularly.
- Teach school-aged children to encrypt access to their phone and computer.
- Have a very pointed conversation with them about “sexting,” the risky practice of sending sexually explicit photos and/or messages which can easily be forwarded without their knowledge. Doing so may actually be defined as child pornography.
- And establish a family policy for acceptable computer use.
- List what may or may not be allowed to be done on a computer.
- Include clear rules about time limits.
- Keep the children’s computer out of their bedroom and put it in a very public area such as a kitchen or the family room.

At the same time, parents need to make sure that their own children aren’t tempted to cross the line and become, even ever so briefly, Internet bullies themselves, secretly getting back at someone they believe has crossed them. As we must

all remember, when it comes to children, just one single malicious Internet rumor can result in unimaginably deep emotional scars that may last a lifetime. I understand the plight of many families in America and realize that a parent may have very little time with a child or may not even be involved at all. We must be creative in our intervention in order to associate with community leaders who have influence and access to our children.

Finally, we need to give school officials the tools they need to deal with cyber-bullying comprehensively, to address early prevention, early intervention when incidents arise, and chronic situations. Some examples of this comprehensive approach might be school officials and leaders in the community coordinating Public Service Announcements, Special School Programs, banners placed where students congregate, constant website postings prohibiting cyber-bullying, links from various websites and the thousands of additional resources we can bring to stop cyber-bullying. It is time for the "Keyboard Bullies" to know There is a New Sheriff in Town.

Members of the committee, I thank you for the work you are doing. I've devoted countless hours of my show to cyber-bullying because I know it's one of the most destructive forces out there, not only for children, but for families as well. It is our responsibility as educators, lawmakers, concerned citizens and as parents to stand up against this growing, insidious threat. The lightning speed at which technology is advancing demands our response.

Congresswoman McCarthy, Members of the committee, I thank you for the honor of addressing you this morning. It has been a privilege.

Chairwoman McCARTHY. Dominique.

**STATEMENT OF DOMINIQUE NAPOLITANO, TEEN MEMBER,
GIRL SCOUTS, USA'S LET ME KNOW (LMK) PROGRAM**

Ms. NAPOLITANO. Good morning, Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts and members of the committee. My name is Dominique Napolitano and I am here on behalf of youth across the country to learn the teen's perspective on an important issue facing my generation, Internet safety and security, especially the subject of cyber-bullying. I am also here as a Girl Scout as a proud member of Suffolk County Troop 2217.

As a leading girl-serving organization, Girl Scouts is dedicated ensuring that girls have the know-how tools and leadership skills they need to address life's challenges, including cyber-bullying.

I would like to begin by telling a personal story about cyber-bullying. Although I have never been cyber-bullied nor have I ever cyber-bullied anyone, it still affects me and my peers. I know people who have been the victims of this terrible behavior, notably my classmate, Mary T. A sarcastic boy in my school created a Facebook fan club called the Mary T Fan Club that was expressly for the purpose of publicly humiliating her. A fan club is typically a group made for a whole bunch of people to join because they like the person, place or thing being expressed, such as Leonardo DiCaprio Fan Club or the Disney World Fan Club.

The Mary T Fan Club, however, listed sarcastic things about the individual, things that would hurt a typical teenager. It seems unbelievable why someone would hurt anyone in such an emotionally devastating way where everyone from the school could see it. I am happy to report that this student was disciplined not only in school but also outside of school. His pranks socially backfired on him when students started joining it to bash him for his cowardly act. He realized how bad the idea was when the rest of the school agreed that his behavior was one of the most hurtful things you can do to another. He tried in vain to remove the comments and

it was amazing to see that even people who are not friendly with Mary stood up for her in unbelievable ways.

This student received in-school suspension as well as was suspended from the school sports team after dozens of students ran to the principal, campus ministry leaders and guidance counselors to report him. I am sure Mary will always have the emotional scars he left when he made the fan club, though.

Unfortunately Mary's experience is not unique. According to the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges, 1 in 6 students, grades 6 to 10, that is 3.2 million students victims of on line bullying each year.

As a girl and a Girl Scout, I realize that cyber-bullying is an important issue for girls. The Girl Scouts Research Institutes report, *Girls in News Media*, we learn that girls say the Internet allows them to treat peers more cruelly than they would face-to-face interaction, without having to see the immediate responses to their behavior. Moreover, a Girl Scouts research report, "Feeling Safe," found out the number one safety concern for girls is their emotional safety.

My experience as a Girl Scout really helped me become an advocate on this issue. About 1½ years ago, I was invited by Girl Scouts of the USA to become one of the teen editors of LMK. LMK which is text speak for Let Me Know, is a girl lead interactive Internet site created by Girl Scouts and Microsoft. It is a unique place where teens help parents and other teens find information about on line safety from a teenager's point of view.

I also participated in a Girl Scouts program called, "It is Your World—Change It." This program emphasized the need for healthy and respectful relationships and also helped me find my own strength and positively handle peer pressure.

In closing, I would like to reinforce 2 points for your consideration, the first is that cyber-bullying is one of the largest set of behaviors called relational aggression aims to harm an individual's self esteem, feeling of self-worth and relationships with his or her peers. Girls especially are prone to relational aggression and cyber-bullying is just one way that it takes place.

As Congress considers various policy proposals to address cyber safety, I hope the committee addresses relational aggression. Unfortunately, these issues are often ignored or overlooked by teachers, administrators, policymakers and even other kids. But the victims of relational aggression and cyber-bullying are more likely to experience loneliness, depression, anxiety and poor school performance. Teachers, students, administrators and policymakers must take the whole spectrum of relational aggression, including cyber-bullying seriously. The second point is that youth are part of the solution.

Through the LMK program, Girl Scouts has created one of the only Internet safety programs that is for kids by kids. I know from my experience that kids don't always think that adults understand their issues or get technology so we need to empower youth to take this problem into our own hands and find solutions that work for us. I feel that I have had that experience through Girl Scouts, my youth group and in school, but far too many kids don't get that chance.

Thank you again, Chairwoman McCarthy, Congressman Platts and other members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to be here on behalf of America's youth and am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Napolitano follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Dominique Napolitano, on Behalf of
Girl Scouts of the USA**

Thank you, Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts, and Members of the Committee. My name is Dominique Napolitano, and I am here on behalf of youth across the country to lend the teen perspective to an important issue affecting my generation—cyber safety. I am also here representing Girl Scouts of the USA, and girls across the country who are directly affected by this issue. I hope that my testimony will help you all better understand what it's like for teens today, and also highlight how this issue affects girls.

A tale of cyberbullying

"An intimidating boy at my school created a Facebook "fan club" called the "Mary T. Fan Club" that was created expressly for the purpose of publically humiliating my classmate Mary. The "Mary T. fan club" made sarcastic comments about Mary's body, hair and personality, and encouraged her peers to make fun of Mary.

I'm happy to report that this student was not only disciplined in school, but also outside of school. His prank socially backfired on him when students started joining the fan club and began standing up for Mary. He realized how bad this idea was when the rest of the school agreed that his behavior was one of the most hurtful things to do to another person. It was amazing to see that even people who are not friendly with Mary stood up for her in unbelievable ways. That said, this bully continues to poke fun of her behind her back. I'm sure Mary will always have the emotional scars he left when he made the fan club."

Cyberbullying, relational aggression and related cyber threats

Mary's story is only one example of the challenges that many youth face today in cyberspace. In more heartbreaking cases, we hear stories of Megan Meier, Phoebe Prince, and Alexis Pilkington, each of whom ended her life after unrelenting bullying, including cyberbullying. A common theme in each of these cases, is that these girls were not the victims of physical violence, but were instead the subjects of a form of emotional and social bullying called relational aggression (RA).

Relational aggression encompasses behaviors that harm someone by damaging, threatening, or manipulating her relationship with her peers, or by injuring a girl's feeling of social acceptance. Girls are more likely to use this subtle, indirect and emotional form of aggression than boys.ⁱ They are also more likely to report feeling angry (56 percent), hurt (33 percent), embarrassed (32 percent), or scared (10 percent) after being bullied.ⁱⁱ

Cyberbullying is a perfect example of relational aggression. By using digital media such as cell phones, social networking sites, email and other technologies, children can frighten, embarrass, harass or otherwise hurt their peers anonymously, without engaging in physical aggression, and without seeing the immediate responses to their behavior. This type of behavior is also startlingly common. Cyberbullying starts as early as 2nd grade and peaks in 4th grade and then again in 7th grade. Eighty-five percent of middle school students polled last year said they had been cyberbullied at least once, and 70 percent of 13-16 year olds polled said they had cyberbullied someone else at least once.ⁱⁱⁱ

While in most instances relational aggression or cyberbullying does not end in suicide, this behavior does pose a very real threat to children's—especially girl's—safety. In the groundbreaking original research report *Feeling Safe*, the Girl Scouts Research Institute found that nearly half of all girls (46 percent) defined safety as not having their feelings hurt; girls who face cyberbullying or the threat of cyberbullying do not feel safe. Moreover, girls' number one concern (32 percent) was

ⁱ Marion K. Underwood. *Social Aggression among Girls* (Guilford Series On Social And Emotional Development). New York: The Guilford Press, 2003.

ⁱⁱ Harris Interactive, *Trends and Tudes: Cyberbullying*, April 2006.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Prevent Cyberbullying Before It Starts." LMK: Life Online. Girl Scouts of the United States of America. <http://lmk.girlscouts.org/Online-Safety-Topics/Cyberbullying/Stop-Cyberbullying/Prevent-Cyberbullying-Before-It-Starts.aspx>

a fear of being teased or made fun of, and 38 percent of girls surveyed worry about their emotional safety when spending time with their peers. Girls who feel emotionally unsafe are more likely to feel sad, have trouble paying attention in school, get low grades, and have trouble making decisions.

Because R.A. is not as overt as “traditional” schoolyard bullying, it has not received the same attention from researchers, educators, and parents. However, Relational Aggression is just as harmful as physical bullying to a student’s ability to learn, grow, and succeed. It is imperative that we recognize cyberbullying for what it is—a symptom of the larger problem of relational aggression.

Cyberspace poses a number of other threats to young girls, such as online sexual predators, inappropriate sharing of information, and the disturbing new trend of “sexting”. One in seven boys and one in four girls reports meeting strangers off the internet^{iv}—at clear risk to their own safety. Teens often misjudge “how much is too much,” and share personal information or post inappropriate pictures that will hurt them when applying to college or for jobs. An extreme example of over-the-edge behavior is the trend of “sexting,” or sending sexually explicit images or messages via cell phone. One study found that 31 percent of young men and 36 percent of young women have sent nude or seminude images of themselves, and even more have sent sexually suggestive messages. Fifty-one percent of teen girls cite pressure from a guy as a reason for sexting, while only 18 percent of teen boys cite pressure from girls.^v This behavior can clearly have life-long consequences for a girl.

Girl Scouts research and programming

I am proud to be here today representing Girl Scouts of the USA. Girl Scouts is the world’s preeminent organization for building leadership in girls, serving 2.5 million girl members and 900,000 adult members in every corner of the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and ninety-five countries worldwide.

My experience as a Girl Scout really helped me become an advocate on cyberbullying. About 1.5 years ago, I was invited by Girl Scouts of the USA to become one of the teen editors of LMK (text-speak for Let Me Know). This innovative program, which was created by Girl Scouts and Microsoft, is a unique online safety resource designed by girls, for girls. At LMK, girls are the technology experts on subjects that are often best discussed at a teen-to-teen level, like cyberbullying, online predators and social networking. This girl-led campaign allows girls to share their online concerns with peer “tech-perts” about the issues that affect them while raising awareness about how to help keep girls (ages 13–17) safe while surfing the Web. In addition, parents have access to a site specifically geared to their needs, equipping them with the tools necessary to understand and act on the rapidly changing world of online safety. LMK offers a digital patch to Girl Scouts, motivating them to increase their knowledge of internet safety. For more information, please visit: <http://lmk.girlscouts.org>.

I have also benefited from Girl Scouts new program, the Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE). The GSLE helps girls build the leadership skills they need to address the challenges of daily life, including relational aggression, bullying and girls cyber safety. The GSLE engages girls in discovering themselves and their values, connecting with others, and taking action to make the world a better place.

For example, when I was a cadette Girl Scout, my troop did a new Girl Scout Leadership Journey program called “aMAZE: The Twists and Turns of Getting Along,” where we learned about friendships, cliques and conflicts, bullies, and cyber-relationships. This program helped us recognize and combat cyberbullying and other forms of relational aggression, how to safely use social networking websites, and how to deal with online friends or acquaintances who want to meet in person. We signed an Internet Safety Pledge, through which we promised to not give out personal information online, to follow the rules of Internet sites, to never meet with someone they meet online without talking to a parent first, to set up rules with a parent for going online, to practice online “netiquette,” and more.

Policy solutions

As Congress considers various policy proposals to address cyber safety, Girl Scouts stands ready to provide resources, information and solutions. Girl Scouts encourages Congress to take a broad, holistic approach, including efforts to build confidence among girls, empowering them to prevent cyberbullying before it starts and to stop it when they see it. Specifically, we encourage you to:

^{iv} Parry Aftab. “What can you do to protect your child from sexual predators online?” <http://www.wiredsafety.org/askparry/special-reports/spr1/index.html>

^v Sex and Tech: Results from a Survey of Teens and Young Adults. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2007.

- Recognize the significant threat posed by relational aggression and encourage schools to adopt and strengthen policies specifically to prevent and address relational aggression and cyberbullying.
- Educate parents, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel in recognizing, preventing, and mitigating the effects of relational aggression and cyberbullying.
- Support community-based organizations, including the Girl Scouts, that prevent cyberbullying and teach about cyber security, online privacy, online sexual predators, and the use of social networking sites and mobile devices.

On behalf of Girl Scouts of the USA, and girls across the country, thank you, again, for your focus on this important topic.

GSUSA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office, located in Washington, D.C., works in partnership with local Girl Scout councils to educate representatives of the legislative and executive branches of government and advocate for public policy issues important to girls and Girl Scouting.

For further information please contact Sharon Pearce, Director of Public Policy at 202-659-3780 or advocacy@girlscouts.org.

Chairwoman McCARTHY. Doctor.

**STATEMENT OF DR. JORGE SRABSTEIN, CHILD PSYCHIATRIST,
MEDICAL DIRECTOR, CLINIC FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS RE-
LATED TO BULLYING, CHILDREN'S NATIONAL MEDICAL CEN-
TER**

Dr. SRABSTEIN. Good morning, Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for your leadership to ensure student cyber safety. I am very honored by your invitation to render testimony to support, raise an awareness about cyber-bullying and its toxicity and provide recommendations for addressing this important issue in the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act.

I am a child adolescent psychiatrist and pediatrician testifying on my behalf, and that of Children's National Medical Center, which provides leadership in clinical research and advocacy efforts to prevent health problems leading to bullying.

The recent evolving understanding is that cyber-bullying is a very serious public health problem, prevalent around the world and linked to serious health problems, including suicide. Cyber-bullying is manifested by victimization, mistreatment or abuse, through electronic chronic forms of conduct from every day Internet and or mobile phones. It can include harassment, threats, insults, teasing, calling names and spreading rumors. Moreover, it may consist of sharing embarrassing picture or videos, incitement to hurt somebody, password theft, privacy violation, like cutting and pasting or spreading viruses.

It has been estimated that at least 14 percent of U.S. adolescents in grades 6 to 10 have been electronically bullied in school, this doesn't count the kids who are bullied, cyber bullied outside this setting, at least once in the previous 2 months. Cyber-bullying can occur in and out of school premises, with the identity of the perpetrator being known by at least 70 percent of the students being victimized. Sixty percent of the known perpetrators are schoolmates. Ninety percent of victims do not report cyber-bullying to their parents because they feel that they need to deal with this problem by themselves and or they are worried that their Internet privileges may be curtailed. Cyber-bullying can occur simultaneously with

other forms of mistreatment happening in schools and other community settings.

Victims, perpetrators or bystanders are at significant risk of suffering from an array of health, safety and education of problems, including depression, frequent absenteeism, eating disorders, and above all, suicidal attempts.

Traditionally, U.S. schools have been at the forefront of helping for more than 100 years, been at the forefront of helping to safeguard the health and safety of their students by contributing to the prevention and detection of public health hazards, such as, in the first part of the 20th century, communicable diseases and later on, psychosocial risk factors. In this context, schools are now being challenged to prevent the safety and health risks linked to bullying and cyber-bullying with the support of health professionals and the full community.

Since '94, State legislatures have been addressing the issue of school bullying. As of June 2010, 42 States have enacted legislation to sign to reduce or prevent bullying and or harassment about public school students. Half of these statutes include language pertaining to harassment through electronic communication, usually on school premises. These laws have a wide scope of legal coverage and jurisdiction, varying in the definition of bullying, the recognition of its link to health safety risks, and the support and strategies to create an infrastructure for bullying prevention.

In order to preserve the physical and emotional well-being of children and adolescents living and studying in the United States of America, it is critical that the United States Congress should enact Bullying and Cyber-Bullying Prevention Legislation. Towards this end, we respectfully recommend that ESEA reauthorization address:

- Promotion of public awareness about the nature, toxicity and prevention of bullying and cyber-bullying;

- Development of safe schools through programs that enhance mutual respect, sensitivity and support of others, tolerance to diversity and disapproval of bullying and cyber-bullying;

- Implementation of research-based, school-wide bullying prevention programs for all students attending elementary and secondary education;

- Fostering the necessity and obligation to report incidents of bullying, as a conscientious community public health attitude, with safeguards against any threat of retaliation or liability for those who report, and support or guidance in reporting bullying, cyber-bullying incidents through a hotline;

- Monitoring and detecting ongoing bullying incidents;

- Providing school interventions through school counselors or nurses to protect and support students who are being bullied, perpetrators should be counseled or sensitized about the harm inflicted, while helped to develop respect, empathy, tolerance and sensitivity to others;

- Consideration of referral for medical evaluation and treatment for victims and perpetrators who experience physical or psychological symptoms linked to bullying.

I want to thank the Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry for their extraordinary support in helping me to prepare this testi-

mony. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chairwoman McCARTHY. Thank you.

[The statement of Dr. Srabstein follows:]

Prepared Statement of Jorge C. Srabstein, M.D., Medical Director, Clinic for Health Problems Related to Bullying, Children's National Medical Center, Washington, DC

Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts and distinguished members of this Subcommittee, thank you for your leadership to ensure students' cyber-safety. I am very honored by your invitation to render testimony to support raising awareness about cyber-bullying and its toxicity and to provide recommendations for addressing this important issue through the "Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act (ESEA)."

I am testifying on my behalf and that of Children's National Medical Center, which provides leadership in clinical, research and advocacy efforts to prevent health problems linked to bullying. In the interest of time, I will keep my remarks brief; please see my written testimony for more expanded remarks and further information about the programs with which I am involved at Children's National.

There is an evolving understanding that cyber-bullying is a very serious public health problem, prevalent around the world and linked to serious health problems, including suicide.^{5,7,10,26} Cyber-bullying is manifested by victimization, mistreatment or abuse through electronic forms of contact, primarily the Internet and/or mobile phones. It can include harassment, threats, insults, teasing, calling names and spreading rumors. Moreover, it may consist of sharing embarrassing pictures or videos, incitement to hurt somebody, password theft, privacy violation ("cut and pasting") or spreading viruses.^{1,10,12,15}

It has been estimated that 14 percent of US adolescents in grades 6-10 have been electronically bullied in school at least once in the previous two months.⁷ Cyber-bullying can occur in and/or out of school premises, with the identity of the perpetrator being known by at least 70 percent of the students being victimized.⁶⁵ Fifty percent of the known perpetrators are schoolmates.⁶⁵ Ninety percent of victims do not report cyber-bullying to their parents because they feel that they need to deal with this problem by themselves and/or they worry that their Internet privileges may be curtailed.⁶⁵

Cyber-bullying can occur simultaneously with other forms of mistreatment happening in schools and/or other community settings.^{3,7} Victims, perpetrators or bystanders are at significant risk of suffering from an array of health, safety and educational problems, including depression, frequent absenteeism, eating disorders and, above all, suicidal attempts.^{4,5,16,18,21,22,25,30,32,34,36,45,66}

Traditionally, US schools have been at the forefront of helping to safeguard the health and safety of their students by contributing to the prevention and detection of public health hazards such as communicable diseases and psycho-social risk factors. In this context, schools are now being challenged to prevent the safety and health risks linked to bullying and cyber-bullying with the support of health professionals and the whole community.^{26,49}

Since 1994, state legislatures have been addressing the issue of school bullying.⁴⁵ As of June 2010, 42 states have enacted legislation designed to reduce or prevent bullying and/or harassment among public school students.^{46,47} Half of these statutes include language pertaining to harassment through electronic communication.⁴⁶ These laws have a wide scope of legal coverage and jurisdiction, varying in the definition of bullying, the recognition of its link to health/safety risks, and the support and strategies to create an infrastructure for bullying prevention.⁴⁵

In order to preserve the physical and emotional well-being of children and adolescents living and studying in the United States of America, it is critical that the United States Congress should enact Bullying and Cyber-Bullying Prevention Legislation. Towards this end, we respectfully recommend that ESEA reauthorization address:

- Promotion of public awareness about the nature, toxicity and prevention of bullying and cyber-bullying;
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- Implementation of research-based, school-wide bullying prevention programs for all students attending elementary and secondary education;

- Fostering the necessity and obligation to report incidents of bullying, as a conscientious community public health attitude, with safeguards against any threat of retaliation or liability for those who report, and support or guidance in reporting bullying/cyber-bullying incidents through a hotline;
 - Monitoring and detecting ongoing bullying incidents;
 - Providing school intervention through school counselors or nurses to protect and support students who are being bullied. Perpetrators should be counseled or sensitized about the harm inflicted, while helped to develop respect, empathy, tolerance and sensitivity to others;
 - Consideration of referral for medical evaluation and treatment for victims and perpetrators who experience physical and psychological symptoms linked to bullying
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Background

Cyber-bullying: Challenges to its prevention

The evolving expansion of modern communication technologies have exposed young people to the risk of being mistreated in an infinite number of social settings, unknown to mankind until few years ago.^{1 15} The frequent occurrence of cyber-bullying outside school premises as well as the occasional anonymity of cyber-perpetrators may interfere with strategies for its prevention. Furthermore, educational policymakers may encounter a delicate balance between the authority to establish formal discipline to a student's right of free speech and the responsibility of preserving student's safety.¹¹

Cyber-bullying, in spite of its unique aspects, occurs simultaneously with other forms of bullying, and shares with them a significant link to serious health problems. It is therefore important that strategies and policies to prevent cyber-bullying should be developed both within the framework of its distinct nature and its similarities and association with other forms of victimization or mistreatment.^{3 5,7,8}

Bullying-Related Public Health Risks

Over the past few years, a series of reports have highlighted the serious public health and safety risks associated with bullying. Numerous scientific studies have shown that bullying adversely affects the health and development of both victims and perpetrators of the bullying, as well as other children in the environment.^{16 35}

There is an urgent need to address longstanding cultural perceptions that bullying is a normative part of child development that is mostly associated with modest physical pestering among children and adolescents. Indeed, many parents, teachers and others see bullying as "just a part of growing up." This is a dangerous and erroneous assumption. Instead, it is quite clear that bullying is a multi-faceted and toxic form of abuse, prevalent on a global scale and across the lifespan.^{17,18}

Bullying is a serious form of mistreatment manifested by the repeated exposure of one person to either physical aggression by one or more people, and/or being hurt with teasing, name-calling, mockery, threats, harassment, taunting, social exclusion or rumors. It can be simultaneously prevalent in different social settings, widening the scope of prevention efforts, beyond the school milieu. We need to be alerted to its occurrence in "after-school" programs; in the neighborhood; over the Internet and cellular phones; at home between siblings; in dating relationships; summer camps and organized athletic activities. In short, when tolerated, bullying takes place everywhere in our communities.

The developmental link between school bullying and its occurrence in adulthood challenged us to extend the range of our responsibility to prevent bullying through college and into the workplace.^{20,23,24,37} It is estimated that some thirty percent of US students (higher in some other countries) are involved in bullying, as victims and/or bullies, with others being adversely affected as passive participants (witnesses or encouragers).^{38,39} All those involved in bullying have now been shown to be at significantly increased risk for multiple problems when compared to their uninvolved peers. Children involved in bullying suffer from a wide spectrum of physical and emotional symptoms, including depression, irritability, anxiety, sleeping difficulties, headaches and/or stomachaches.^{16 33} Furthermore, there is an evolving array of reports documenting that bullying-related illnesses increasingly include such serious problems as eating disorders, school absenteeism, running away, alcohol and drug abuse and, above all, self-inflicted or accidental injuries and suicidal behavior.^{18,19,22,29,36}

Students who are in the dual roles of both being bullies and victims (victim-perpetrators) have been found to be the most vulnerable among those who participate in bullying and appear to experience a wide display of problems. They are especially

at risk in attempting or completing suicide before age 25, as well as to committing repeated criminal offenses between ages 16 and twenty-five.^{21,22,25} Moreover, they are usually misunderstood and less protected when they are judged to be responsible for their victimization as they also mistreat others.

New studies indicate that those students who are bystanders and/or witness episodes of bullying are also at higher risk for mental health problems than are their peers.²³ Most of all, bullying is linked to premature mortality, due to suicide, homicide or accidental injuries.²⁶

The responsibility to prevent the consequences of bullying extends into adulthood as there is evidence of a significant association between childhood bullying behavior and later psychiatric illness.²⁴ Moreover, adults bullied in the workplace are prone to suffer from a variety of problems, including depression, cardiovascular problems, fibromyalgia, absenteeism and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.^{41 43}

A systematic review⁴⁴ of school-based interventions to prevent bullying has determined that “the chance of success is greater if the intervention incorporates a whole school-based approach, involving multiple disciplines and the entire school community.”

Preventative interventions should include whole community awareness campaigns about the nature of bullying and its dangers.^{26,49} Efforts should also be made to enhance the emotional and organizational environments in school settings by promoting sensitivity, mutual respect and tolerance to diversity while prohibiting bullying.^{26,49} Bullying incidents should be reported to ensure a consistent and organized response, including support of the victim and counseling for the perpetrator by sensitizing him/her to the harm they have inflicted.^{26,49} Referral to appropriate health services will be required to alleviate the physical and emotional consequences of bullying, as well as to help those who continue bullying behavior in spite of organizational counseling.^{26,49} The efficacy of this public health approach should be monitored by a periodic assessment of the prevalence of bullying-related morbidity and mortality.^{26,49}

Children’s National and its anti-bullying prevention efforts

Children’s National Medical Center, a 283 bed not-for-profit academic medical center in Washington, DC, has provided hope to sick children and their families throughout the metropolitan region for nearly 140 years. The mission of Children’s National is to improve health outcomes for children regionally, nationally and internationally; to be a leader in creating innovative solutions to pediatric healthcare problems; and to excel in care, advocacy, research and education to meet the unique needs of children, adolescents and their families. Children’s National is ranked among the best pediatric hospitals in America by U.S. News & World Report and the Leapfrog Group. It is a Magnet recognized pediatric hospital, one of a handful of elite healthcare facilities nationwide.

For the past several years, Children’s National has supported efforts to prevent bullying and its related health risks, through clinical, research and advocacy activities. This work has led to the development of a Coalition for the Prevention of Bullying,⁵⁰ which was conceived as a volunteer partnership of representatives of different community sectors. The main objectives of this initiative were to 1) promote awareness about the nature and toxicity of bullying; and 2) advocate for the implementation of strategies and policies for a whole-community approach to the prevention of bullying.

The Clinic for Health Problems Related to Bullying⁵¹ at Children’s National Medical Center provides psychiatric evaluation and treatment of children and adolescents who participate in bullying as bullies and/or victims, and who experience frequent physical and emotional symptoms or educational problems. The goal of this clinic is to provide a stabilization of impulsivity and mood difficulties that may lead to bullying others, as well as provide treatment for physical and emotional consequences of being bullied.

In 2008, Dr. Srabstein testified⁵² before the Maryland General Assembly in support of House Bill 199, which added terms “bullying” and “cyber-bullying” into statute concerning policies to report harassment. The bill also required schools to establish policies for the prevention of bullying. The bill was enacted into law in 2008.

In addition to his legislative advocacy, Dr. Srabstein participated in an ad-hoc working group providing support to the Maryland State Department of Education in the development of a Model Bullying Prevention Policy.⁵³

Children’s National has supported the development of symposiums^{54 64} and the publication of research studies^{16,18,25,26,27,45,49} to raise international awareness about the significant health problems associated with bullying along the lifespan. In a recent editorial published by the World Health Organization Bulletin, Drs.

Srabstein⁶⁷ and Leventhal⁶⁸ have highlighted the global public health significance of bullying with an international call for the development of public health policies.²⁶

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Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Ms. Paris.

**STATEMENT OF BARBARA-JANE PARIS, PRINCIPAL,
CANYON VISTA MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Ms. PARIS. Good morning. Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts, members of the committee, thank you for having me here today. I am currently a principal in Austin, Texas. I have 1,200 middle school students of whom approximately 40 percent are minority students. I am fortunate it is a highly successful school, we have the highest ranking exemplary in the State of Texas, and we are very proud of that. However, what brings me here today is not something we are terribly proud of, cyber-bullying is one of those issues that transcends everything else in education. We can sit all day long and talk about dropout rates, standardized achievement, college readiness, but this particular thing transcends all of those things. Because if a child doesn’t feel safe at school, all of those other issues are non starters.

I am also here on behalf of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, they are the preeminent organization for principals and their purpose is to be a voice for middle and high school principals. I am also a volunteer for [bullypolice.usa](http://www.bullypolice.usa), and you will know why in a second.

Basically I am here to be a voice to those people who can’t be a voice for themselves, the students who are too disempowered by cyber-bullying and several of whom have gone on to commit suicide, so I am here to be a voice for them, and for the principals that serve them in our public schools every day.

Our challenge, and it is yours and mine, is to protect them against the risks from that technology, while still protecting their First Amendment rights and allow them to use technology as a legitimate tool. And there is a preconceived notion in education that this is a State issue and not a Federal issue. But I would say to you today the same thing I tell my staff on a daily basis, where we put our time and our money sends a clear message to our community and our stakeholders about what we value, and we need your help at the Federal level.

Here is how this happened, a few years ago, a high school principal in east Texas and I had a student come to me and tell me, this student is going to kill herself over cyber-bullying, do something, Ms. Paris. And I said, I shall. And I thought, what am I going to do? I was clueless, I was powerless. I was not a new prin-

principal, I had been in administration for several years, but I did not have the tools to know where to go next. All I could tell this child was, I will do something. If it hadn't been for the research of Parry Aftab, who is a fellow speaker here today, and she did not know I was going to say that. I did some research and she helped me, her work helped me immensely. It gave me practical tools to have the bashing sites shut down and moved.

It gave me legitimate ways of working with fellow administrators. And then I took that work on the road because my mission then became I don't want another principal ever to have that situation in their school. It is a powerlessness and we need your help to take it away. What we really need is some backbone. We need courage. We need somebody who is behind us when we say, knock it off, it is not okay to behave that way in the culture that we have developed in our campus. We need backing to say that when parents come to us and say First Amendment right to free speech. We need your help with those issues.

Here is why, it took me years and a huge amount of time to come up with systems to train other principals. And the truth is the campus administrators says it is not our focus, we are supposed to be instructional leaders. If we are going to have the time to focus on those things that we value, then we need systems in place that deal with issues such as cyber-bullying because it will suck your time dry.

I later had a situation where the police department in Austin had to shut my campus down because of Internet threats that had been sent out on an e-mail. If you can imagine that disrupts the learning environment and the educational process, imagine how those parents felt in my community? So it is interfering with learning.

What I found out was that 13 million students were being cyber-bullied 5 years ago in middle school, and those students were dying. Dr. Phil had already mentioned several, and Mr. Platts, you did too, you mentioned high profile cases. But what I found were stories about Matt Efron and Jared High and Carl Hoover and Kelly and Jeff. Here is something Jeff's mom told us in the book *Bully Side*. "The bully murdered my son using the keyboard as his weapon, just as surely if had he crawled through a broken window and choked the life from him with his bare hands. It was a not a death that was quick and merciful. It was a death that was full it was slow and torturous carried out day after day with lies and rumors and gossip."

In 2008, GLSEN worked with NASSP and they found that two-thirds of principals coast to coast are very desperate for help in developing professional development to deal with these issues. I would venture to say that 2 years later, if you were to go back and ask the other third, they would say put my down for that too.

There is this huge disparity between knowledge and wisdom on the Internet. Mr. Platts, your son is sitting behind you now, I venture to say if he were like my child, he would probably text his friends a thousand times since we had been sitting there. It is inherent to our culture and their age group.

Mr. PLATTS. He would like, to, but my 6th grader and 8th grader don't yet have their own cell phones.

Ms. PARIS. That is what you think.

Mr. PLATTS. We are holding out.

Ms. PARIS. And this disparity, bear in mind, technology is everything that was invented after I was born and frankly that include the 8 track. So I don't have—I mean, that is the truth. I don't have that knowledge, but the point is the kids have the knowledge, but we are the ones with the wisdom. They don't have the wisdom to know how to navigate that technology in a safe and meaningful way in and out of a school environment. If we as the responsible adults in their world don't share that wisdom in a structured and strategic way, then we are letting them down, we are not going to be able to educate them. These kids are so desperate to belong to something that good kids are posing naked and sending photographs to their selected peer group, and we all know how that turns out for them, don't we?

As a member of National Safe Schools Partnership, NASSP has endorsed the policy recommendations to prevent bullying and that is embodied in your Safe Schools Improvement Act, which would amend the safe and drug free school so that this work is eligible for Federal grants. The programs that I promote and have principals implement coast to coast are not funded. These are unfunded BJ Paris mandates. We do this because it is a good thing, we need your help with that.

We have to break that code of silence. In 84 percent of school shootings that are related to bullying, the student told somebody first. We have to have systems in place that enable students to speak up on behalf of their peer group.

My mother always told me don't speak unless you have something to add to the silence. I would like to think that today the stories that we share help fill the silence in a way that will make sure that no other names get added to the list that I shared with you today.

We appreciate your time and your support and make ourselves available to you as a resource at any opportunity. Thank you for your time.

[The statement of Ms. Paris follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Barbara-Jane "BJ" Paris, Board of Directors,
National Association of Secondary School Principals**

Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to speak on the issue of cyberbullying and its effect on student achievement. My name is BJ Paris, and I am the principal of Canyon Vista Middle School in Austin, TX, where I have served for 3 years. Of my 30 years in education in three countries, I have spent the last 10 in administration.

Our school serves more than 1,100 students, representing more than 20 countries, in grades 6—8. A small percentage of our students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals, but more than 10% are considered at risk. Thirty-five percent of our students are Asian/Pacific Islander, 6% are Hispanic, and 1.7% are Black. Our scores for the 2008—09 school year were excellent in reading, math, social studies, and science, and Canyon Vista has received an exemplary rating by the Texas Education Agency.

The Round Rock School District, where my school is located, covers approximately 110 square miles that encompass high-tech manufacturing and urban retail centers, suburban neighborhoods, and farms and ranches. Our district consists of 30 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, 4 high schools, a ninth-grade center, and 2 alternative learning centers.

Today, I am also appearing on behalf of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, where I will begin a four-year term on the board of directors in

July. In existence since 1916, NASSP is the preeminent organization of and national voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and aspiring school leaders from across the United States and more than 45 countries around the world. Our mission is to promote excellence in middle level and high school leadership.

NASSP

NASSP has a long history of supporting the personalization of the school environment as a condition for student engagement and achievement. In 1996, we published *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* in which we called for sweeping change in schools. Recommendations from that and later *Breaking Ranks* publications focus on areas that the school principal can influence directly. NASSP believes that ensuring student safety is the highest priority in schools because no learning can take place without it. Because of these foundational beliefs, we have been a strong and ongoing advocate of all efforts to promote a safe and orderly learning environment.

In 2000, as a direct result of these beliefs, NASSP hired Bill Bond to be the NASSP Specialist for School Safety. Before coming to NASSP, Mr. Bond served as principal of Heath High School in West Paducah, KY, where on December 1, 1997, incidents of bullying led to a tragic school shooting at the school. This shooting, along with others across the nation, has precipitated Bond's involvement in safe school awareness, and since joining NASSP, Bond has been a resource for schools and principals' organizations across the nation. As you well know, however, bullying no longer requires face-to-face interaction—the Internet and the ever-expanding use of electronic communications and social networking Web sites have taken bullying to another level. For the past five years, Mr. Bond and I have traveled the country working with school officials and other stakeholders to minimize the impact of cyberbullying. The school leader's persistent challenge is to protect students against online predators and prevent cyberbullying while safeguarding students' First Amendment rights and encouraging the use of the Internet as a legitimate educational tool. Sadly this need to protect students has too often resulted in avoiding the same high-tech tools with which students must be familiar to be competitive in the workplace or to succeed in postsecondary education after graduating from high school.

To help meet this challenge, in 2007 the NASSP Board of Directors adopted a position statement on Internet safety that states that "Internet service providers and social networking Web sites have an obligation to offer their clients safeguards against predators and other cyber criminals." But this in itself is not enough; the position statement also encourages schools to "formulate clear guidelines to protect students and teachers against cyber bullying and other criminal activities."

Personal Testimony

As a high school principal five years ago in east Texas, I had a student who became suicidal after a cyberbullying incident, and I had no idea what my responsibilities, options, limitations were to deal with it. I knew I could not take the easy way out and pretend it was not my problem because the bullying hadn't taken place on school property or during school hours. I vowed to find out everything I could about cyberbullying so that I could limit its impact on other students in the future. Among other things that dragged me into the technological world, I learned to block certain Web sites at the school and began looking at best practices around the country. This was how I first learned of the work of Parry Aftab, my fellow panelist here today and Bully Police USA, a watchdog organization that advocates on behalf of bullied children and reports on state antibullying laws. Bully Police USA was instrumental in providing me with strategies for navigating the inherent problems of cyberspace in our schools. I began working with the Texas affiliate as a volunteer and also became friends with the organization's founder, Brenda High. A year later, my first as a middle school principal, my campus was locked down by police because of threats made in an off-campus e-mail. Once again, I vowed to learn more and share my experience with other principals so that they would not find themselves feeling powerless at a critical time. More importantly, I hoped that by sharing what I knew were the pitfalls and outcomes of cyberbullying, I could educate school personnel about how to develop preventative systems so that they might never be faced with similar situations.

I regularly speak to principals across the country about cyberbullying and offer recommendations for those schools and districts that do not currently have policies in place. I have also become an advocate at the state level, testifying in Austin before the state legislature with my students in support of legislation that would em-

power campus leaders to develop systems for dealing with cyberbullying in their communities and to provide professional development for all educators.

Research

Cyberbullying has gained national attention with a number of high-profile incidents in Massachusetts and Missouri. In 2006, more than 13 million children and adolescents ages 6-17 were estimated to be victims of cyberbullying, with a majority of these incidents occurring at the middle school level. In a September 2008 column in the NASSP publication *Principal Leadership*, Ted Feinburg, the assistant executive director of the National Association of School Psychologists, and Nicole Robey, a school psychology intern, wrote that victims of cyberbullying “suffer equal if not greater psychological harm because the hurtful information can be transmitted broadly and instantaneously and can be difficult to eliminate. Aggressors can remain anonymous and are hard to stop. Not knowing who an aggressor is can cause adolescents to be hypervigilant in terms of surveying their social environment, both cyber and real, to avoid harmful encounters. Cyberbullying also may be worse than face-to-face bullying because people feel shielded from the consequences of their actions and often do or say things online that they would not in person. In some cases, cyberbullying can lead to severe dysfunction, externalized violence, and suicide.”

In 2008, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), in collaboration with NASSP, published *The Principal’s Perspective: School Safety, Bullying and Harassment*. The survey explored the perspectives of elementary and secondary public school principals on student bullying and harassment and on the policies, programs, and training that principals have instituted in their schools to address these issues. Some pertinent findings of the report include that:

- Half of public school principals (49%) report that bullying, name calling, or harassment of students is a serious problem at their school
- Bullying or harassment is a particularly prominent problem at the junior high or middle school level
- Most principals speak to the perpetrator and the victim when incidents of harassment are reported to them, but few believe that the majority of bullying or harassment incidents come to their attention.

One question specifically asked principals how often their students engage in cyberbullying or harassment—that is, bullying or harassing others using text messaging, e-mail, instant messaging, Web sites, blogs, social networking sites, and so forth. The report explains that “technological advances have opened up new frontiers for harassment. Both teachers and principals are at a disadvantage in being able to observe many types of cyberbullying. * * * When asked about the extent of this type of activity, most principals (72%) report that students at their school engage in cyberbullying to some extent. However few (8%) believe that students frequently engage in this behavior.” Incidents of cyberbullying increased as students aged: “20% of secondary school principals reported that their students frequently engage in cyberbullying compared with only 1% of elementary school principals. Younger principals (under 45) were also more likely to report that cyberbullying frequently occurs at their school (12% vs. 6% of those 45 years or older). Also, principals of suburban schools are more likely to report that cyberbullying ever occurs at their schools (81%) than principals of urban (66%) or rural (68%) schools.”

The report also speaks to the need for additional professional development to prevent bullying and harassment from occurring: “Bullying and harassment intervention and prevention is an area in which a majority of principals indicate their school currently provides professional development. Yet, despite this fact, principals are most likely to indicate that this is the non-academic area in which the staff at their school needs support or training, as 62% believe that their staff needs the most support or training in this area.”

Recommendations

On the basis of my personal philosophy and experiences with cyberbullying, I offer the following recommendations to guide schools in developing their policies on cyberbullying to create a positive, supportive environment that promotes the academic growth and personal development of every student at the school.

School leaders must:

- Understand that cyberbullying is an aggressive and prevalent threat to the learning environment and that even if it did not happen at school or on a school computer, it can directly affect the educational process and the school environment and must be taken seriously
- Familiarize themselves and their staff members about all aspects of technology, including cell phones, computers, the Internet, blogs, instant messaging, and social

networking Web sites as well as the legal and liability issues associated with the use of these technologies

- Create a team composed of staff members, parents, and students to establish guiding principles for the acceptable use of technology at school, when completing assignments and related activities, and during events taking place off-campus
- Provide staff members with professional development on how to ensure student safety while using technology as an educational tool, including recognizing the signs and possible effects of cyberbullying
- Formulate clear policies that protect students and teachers from cyberbullying and other criminal activities that are related to technology; ensure that students and parents are aware of these policies and the penalties for abusing them
- Instruct all students on the safe use of technology and the impact of cyberbullying and how to recognize and report it when it occurs
- Create user-friendly procedures to encourage students to report cyberbullying when it happens to them or to others
- Conduct orientation sessions for parents about cyberbullying and include information on how they can reinforce safety guidelines and monitor technology use at home and set the expectation that no derogatory statements will be sent or posted about other students or staff members.

A recurring theme in these recommendations is the need for both students and educators to recognize and act to limit cyberbullying. Recognizing students' reluctance to report on classmates, our school acquired an anonymous messaging system—supported with Safe and Drug-Free Schools funding—that allows students to report incidences of bullying without having to identify themselves. This system has contributed greatly to a 70% reduction in students' belief that bullying is a problem at Canyon Vista Middle School.

Fundamentally, school policies must acknowledge the disparity between students' knowledge of technology and their wisdom to manage it effectively. Students, many of whom have remarkable technology knowledge, are so desperate to belong to something that they'll post naked photographs of themselves to a trusted few on the Internet. Education for today's world must help students develop that wisdom so they can recognize and navigate around the dangers of electronic media while also using it for its maximum benefit.

As a member of the National Safe Schools Partnership, NASSP has endorsed federal policy recommendations to prevent bullying and harassment in our nation's schools, which will have a dramatic impact in improving school safety and, correspondingly, student achievement for all students. Specifically, our coalition of national education, health care, civil rights, law enforcement, youth development, and other organizations call on Congress to ensure that:

1. Schools and districts have comprehensive and effective student conduct policies that include clear prohibitions regarding bullying and harassment
2. Schools and districts focus on effective prevention strategies and professional development designed to help school personnel meaningfully address issues associated with bullying and harassment
3. States and districts maintain and report data regarding incidents of bullying and harassment to inform the development of effective federal, state, and local policies that address these issues.

Our recommendations are embodied in the Safe Schools Improvement Act (H.R. 2262), which would amend the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program so that antibullying and harassment programs are eligible for federal grants. The legislation is championed by many members of the subcommittee, and NASSP hopes that it will be enacted into law as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

We also understand, Madame Chairwoman, that you will soon be reintroducing the Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act. NASSP was very supportive of a provision in the SAVE Act that would have expanded the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant program to allow schools to administer a schoolwide climate survey of students, parents, and school personnel. The climate survey would have measured the degree to which collaborative leadership and a professional learning community exist; the personalization of the school environment; and the strength of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment—factors that we believe will lead to student achievement, as outlined in our *Breaking Ranks* publications.

Conclusion

Our students are using ever-changing technology more than ever, and for most of them, the Internet is not simply an after-school activity or a quick and convenient way to research a school assignment—it is a major part of their social life. Texts, instant messages, e-mail, and social networking are as common to them as using

the telephone is to most adults. And in this cyberworld, just as in the face-to-face world, bullying and harassment does happen.

Children in the United States do not have a choice about whether they come to school. It is the law, and if we are going to require them to be there, then we have the moral imperative to ensure that they are in a safe, secure, and productive environment that protects them against all forms of bullying and harassment. If we, the responsible adults, do not purposefully define the culture of our schools, our students will do it for us. How we interact and communicate with one another—whether by oral, written, or electronic means—help define the school culture. As school leaders, we must ensure that every student entrusted in our care is in an environment that promotes safety and security; therefore, we must do everything possible to eliminate all forms of cyberbullying and harassment and to minimize their impact on student achievement should they occur.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes my prepared testimony, but I would be happy to answer any questions you or the other committee members may have.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you. Ms. Aftab.

**STATEMENT OF PARRY AFTAB, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
WIRESAFETY**

Ms. AFTAB. I would like to thank Chairwoman McCarthy and the Ranking Member Platts and the rest of the subcommittee, and frankly, the entire committee. It is a very incestuous issue, cyberbullying. Ms. Paris indicated that she came to us for help, the medical center that the doctor works at had come to us for help. I wrote LMK for the Girl Scouts, and Dr. Phil's offices call mine all the time. And Build A Bear cares a great deal and have come to us.

If you look at this, you recognize that there are 6 degrees of separation from everyone who cares about cyber-bullying. I am a cyberbullying expert, not a bullying one, and there is a difference. I would caution people to stop thinking of bullying and cyberbullying as only the difference in the technologies that they use. We find that different kids will cyber-bully than others. I always say the girls and the geeks are empowered by technology, often they will take on the most popular kids in school.

I will share something I hadn't put in my testimony. I was called by one of the top medical centers that deals with children who are very seriously physically challenged. I am in a different place every day. I donate my time to running WiredSafety and fund it largely from my pocket. I got the phone call and they said we have a serious problem here at the medical center with all of these children and cyber-bullying and I cancelled my speaking engagement. I got in my car and drove far faster than I can put in testimony here before you today.

While I drove up into the school, I said I want to talk to the students. I drove up and I walked in and I was late as usual. They handed me a microphone and in front of me was a room full of children who were typing with a device in their teeth who had breathing apparatus, who couldn't walk, many of them couldn't talk, many couldn't see. And I stood up and I said I am so angry that this has happened to you. I am so angry that people are taking the one technology that gives you access to the world, the one road without ramps and they are doing this and hurting you.

And the head of the medical center and she tapped me on the shoulder and she said, Parry, um, they aren't being cyber-bullied they are cyber-bullying others. And I know you are not supposed

to cheer with this, but you need to recognize that you never really truly know who is on the other side of the device. It is not just Internet, it is not just the social networks, it is not just Flickr and not just handheld gaming devices where kids are now insulting each other on PictoChat through DS. It is not just the Xboxes and Playstations of the world where the kids are game bullying. It is not just the cell phones, where they are saying terrible things to each other. Actually there are 67 different way the teens who work for me who model the Girl Scouts, my guess is we can get some answers here as well—67 different ways you can use the cell phone to cyber-harass and cyber-bully someone. The kids they are very inventive. If they spent as much time studying as they did finding ways to torment each other, we could all go home.

I agreed to cancel a major event that I was doing with Build a Bear for mommy bloggers to be here today. One of the reasons was because of a very strong bipartisanship of the leadership of this particular subcommittee. You do things, you don't just talk. I don't have time for people who just talk. We have to find ways of doing it.

So how do we do that, we reach out to everyone. We reach out to the Dr. Phils of the world, we get Diane Sawyer to do a town meeting on sexting on Good Morning America, first time ever in the morning. And every time Matt Lauer or Meredith have a question about cyber-bullying you make sure you are in studio no matter where you started out the day before.

As we look at this, there are other cyber safety experts in the world, and many of them say it is not so bad. I think many of those are not in the trenches. You don't have to ask me how bad it is, you have someone who's involved in a middle school to tell you how bad it is. I spoke to 44,000 middle schoolers across the United States a couple of years ago and asked if they had ever been cyber bullied, not that way. It all depends on definition, you lay out the things that constitute cyber-bullying.

Has anyone ever taken a picture of you and put your head on someone's naked body, or took a real one of you and passed it out? Told your secrets, gone in, done something terrible on your social networking page, and changed your password so you can't change it back. Do they take your cell phone that was out on a counter unattended and send terrible things to your friends that you are going to get blamed. The answers go on and on as to what constitutes cyber-bullying. The answer is generally minor to minor, using technology as a weapon to hurt another.

What do we do? We need help, nobody has any money, I work for free, I think a lot of others do as well. Unfunded programs in Texas. The good thing is we share. In the olden days, if you wanted to bake a cake, you would ask somebody to bring some flour, and someone else to bring some eggs, and someone else to bring sugar. At the end, everybody got a few pieces to take home. That is what we have to do here. The proposals on the Hill look at funding these issues, but I don't need funding right now, I just need partners.

So when the Girl Scouts said we want to do something, I said tell me how fast we can. Two and a half million girls are now change agents. It started with my Teen Angels program. And Ranking Member Platts, I want your son in my Tween Angels pro-

gram. Tell him we will be advising Toys R Us and Nintendo my guess is he might join us. We need to get out and do this.

The industry, and today I am not speaking as the head of Wired Safety, the oldest and largest cyber safety charity or an advisor to the industry, today I am going to tell you that in addition to all of the bad news we have been taking about, about cyber-bullying and how much it is out there and how often it hurts our children and how the technologies are affected, there is a lot of good news too. Good news you are seeing and hearing here, attention being paid to it, and Dr. Phil's shows and others, from Build A Bear, and I am not going to steal Dave's thunder, from schools and teachers and school administrators who care so much, and mental health experts and young people. But you have MTV's, a Thin Line. I got a phone call a year and a half ago from head of public affairs, he said we want to do something like Rock the Vote, but we want to rock the world on what is happening with kids on digital abuse, they created something that will live on long beyond what we started designing.

You have Microsoft that paid for the LMK program, and so many others. You have Disney that started in cyber safety in 1997 when they first called and I even did a designing spaces for them on how to design a safer room for kids in cyber technology. You have Facebook that just put five people on the safety advisory board, I am one of them. And you have the OSTWG, all of these things that are happening. The industry is behind this, and all of them want to be there. Why? Because they are parents, because they have customers, because they have people who they care about, because they have an obligation to create safer communities, safer networks, they are creating new technologies, they are branding themselves with best practices seals, they are saying we have employees, come in and talk to 5,000 of our employees about these things. IBM commissioned Ceridian to put it out to all of their employees, and we put together some podcasts and videos.

Industry already has stores, industry already has employees, they have distribution arms and communication networks, and they are very happy to share them for free. And they now understand that being safe for kids is good for business. So as we look at this, we need to include them, because sometimes they are the only place where money exists, and even if they don't have money, they have got in-kind expertise that they are happy to share. We need to recognize there are a lot of bad things industry does, but in this case, I have seen a lot more good than bad. I am here to answer any questions I can and help in any way I can. And thank you so much for inviting me to speak.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Aftab follows:]

Prepared Statement of Parry Aftab, Esq., the Kids Internet Lawyer, Author, and Child Protection and Cybersafety Advocate

Cybersafety involves protecting ourselves, our children, our community and our networks. When minors are involved the programs and messages have to be relevant, involve young people in their framing and be quick and easy for parents. Schools often find themselves in the crossfire, especially when cyberbullying among students or sexting images arise. At the same time, the power of digital networks and interactive technology to spur creative educational methods and engage students, parents and educators in forward-thinking ways means we can't sink our

heads in the sand and have to find a way to balance the benefits while containing the risks.

If we view cybersafety as a risk-management issue, it is often easier to tackle. It includes copyright infringement and plagiarism, responsible use, information literacy, digital literacy and digital hygiene, privacy, security, misinformation and hype, sexual exploitation (including the rapid growth of sexting), cyberbullying, ID theft and inappropriate, violent and sexual content. While my books and non-profit role, as Executive Director and Founder of WiredSafety.org, span all risks for consumers and families online, my particular passion is the prevention and ways to address cyberbullying. I created StopCyberbullying.org to help parents, schools, students, law enforcement and all stakeholders address the growing problem of children hurting each other online.

To address cyberbullying adequately, in addition to understanding the stakeholder perspectives, we have to develop educational programs and materials, awareness of the issue and help for victims and their families. We have to focus on character education, role modeling good behaviors for our children and ways to get everyone involved and informed.

We also have to make it easier to understand the scope of the risks and solutions to those risks. When it comes to addressing a big problem from multiple perspectives, industry's involvement is crucial and welcome. Over the years the Internet, technology and offline trusted family brands have stepped up to the plate to help design programs, materials and resources, provide expertise and distribute them to their communities online and offline. Their approaches are as varied as their businesses. And our children are safer and our parents better informed because of their involvement.

Offline and online resources and intervention points tying the schools together with industry and community organizations, as well as the families they serve, must be developed and adopted. We need a cybersafety ecosystem that addresses the most common as well as the most serious risks, and we can continue to look to the technology, entertainment, device and software manufacturers, service providers and Internet industry as advisors for their valuable help.³

Defining the cyberbullying problem

We can't address a problem until it is defined. While there are several attempts to define "cyberbullying" as more than "you'll know it when you see it," WiredSafety defines it as when minors use digital technology as a weapon to hurt another minor. We have been doing this since 1995, longer than any other group, and find that this definition is practical, realistic, and separates adult cyberharassment from minor-to-minor attacks. To meet WiredSafety's definition of cyberbullying, the actions must be intentional, minor-to-minor and must use some type of digital technology (cell phones, Internet, social networks, gaming devices, IM, email, images, YouTube, virtual worlds/games, etc.). The actions can range from a one-time serious threat to repeated and unwanted insults, can be conducted as direct one-to-one attacks (direct cyberbullying), postings intended to be viewed by many (indirect cyberbullying) or schemes designed to set up the victim and have someone else do their dirty work (parents when the text bill arrives, Facebook when false reports are made to them, etc.).

Cyberbullying is growing in epidemic proportions- just ask any middle school teacher, counselor or principal. Over the last two years the number of kids experiencing cyberbullying has increased by more than 30% with attacks becoming increasingly more hateful and vicious. It is also starting earlier and earlier as first and second graders are getting online and stealing virtual world and online games points and passwords from their friends and classmates. However, children's' motives and methods change as they get older and often by gender. Boys tend to use technology tools and infiltrate accounts (hack) or threaten their targets, while girls tend to use social exclusion and reputational attacks. Unlike in face-to-face bullying, size and gender are often irrelevant: girls cyberbully boys, boys cyberbully girls, smaller kids cyberbully the big tough ones. Technology levels all playing fields. As a result, the only way to tackle the problem of cyberbullying is to combine all stakeholders and to be as inventive as children who cyberbully. In short, we need to find what works and seek solutions everywhere, from everyone. We have to think outside of the box.

Educating students to stop cyberbullying

Industry has an important stake in both keeping children and teens safe online and educating parents and their communities. Fortunately, leaders and newcomers alike are interested, involved and generous in sharing their expertise, funding and access. I founded and run WiredSafety, a charity that began its work in 1995

through its unpaid and loosely-organized volunteers by rating websites and helping victims of cyberabuse and cybercrime online; in 15 years there is little we haven't encountered, but cyberbullying and cyberharassment prevention and help is one of our core missions. When I wrote *StopCyberbullying.org* several years ago as a joint project with WiredSafety, it quickly became the most popular cyberbullying awareness site online. Families, schools and communities needed help grappling with this growing problem, and StopCyberbullying.org delivered what they needed.

This September, WiredSafety and I will release the StopCyberbullying Toolkit I authored in time to help students and educators headed back-to-school. The Toolkit contains \$1 million worth of animations, computer games, lesson plans and classroom activities, videos, posters, coloring sheets and worksheets, guides, tip lists and community campaigns for educators, parents, school administrators, guidance counselors, school resource officers and community policing agents, parent teacher organizations and K-12 students. It is a single free downloadable resource for US schools that can be customized to address local and regional concerns and students with special needs. How can a million dollar resource be developed and distributed for free without government funding? We turned to the industry for help and they responded in droves.

I have attached information about cyberbullying, how it works and ways to address it in the Appendix, along with my one-page bio.⁴

Microsoft, Facebook, MySpace and LG Phones joined as platinum sponsors. AOL, Procter & Gamble, Spectorsoft, myYearbook, KidZui, Build-A-Bear Workshop and others also joined as sponsors. The Girl Scouts of the USA, National Crime Prevention Council, ADL, Rachel Simmons, Michele Borba, Bonnie Bracey, Art Wolinsky, Dr. Deanna Guy, Dr. Tom Biller, Teenangels and Tweenangels, Cynthia Logan, Debbie Johnston, Chris Hansen, Xbox, Disney, WebKinz, Zynga, Yahoo!, Nickelodeon, MTV, Pantilla Amiga, Adobe, Unity, Pace University, McAfee, Verizon, Nokia, MiniClip, Candystand (FunTank), Dolphin Entertainment, Hearst, Conde Nast, Seventeen Magazine, ToysRUs, Readers Digest, People Magazine, YouSendIt, the Child Safety Research and Innovation Center, WiredTrust, Marvel and vast numbers of others contributing expertise, support and in-kind to help create and distribute this multi-stakeholder resource with the best available content and activities available.

The charity I run in volunteer-capacity, WiredSafety, also works to bring together all stakeholders through summits, conferences and events sponsored by industry leaders. The first International Stop Cyberbullying Summit was hosted by WiredSafety in 2008 and Verizon's Chairman and CEO, Ivan Seidenberg, delivered the luncheon speech to explain how committed Verizon is to stopping cyberbullying. Since then, they have been important leaders in the industry and brought together other stakeholders to help address the problem. LG Phone and Nokia are becoming engaged in cybersafety messaging and educating the parents who buy their products for their children.

Many other industry players have joined forced with us as well as worked on their own to create programs and raise awareness about cyberbullying. For example:

- Facebook is developing a cyberbullying and harassment page in its safety section to teach parents, teens and users of all ages how to avoid becoming a victim of cyberbullying or being seen as a cyberbully. They have revised their privacy settings to help keep cyberbullies from abusing users' information and posing as them. (The more a network authenticates a user, the less likely cyberbullying can gain ground.) Recently, Facebook partnered with the National Parent Teacher Association to help deliver cyberbullying and other programs to parents at the local level and share wonderful resources and information from the National PTA with others on Facebook. They have also committed the help of their five chosen safety advisory board members (including WiredSafety).

- McAfee partnered with Facebook to provide free long-term trial security software products to all Facebook users. By using a good security product, cyberbullies can be locked out of computers, devices and accounts.

- ToysRUs is partnering with me and WiredSafety's Tweenangels, WiredMoms to develop information for parents about different interactive toys and devices and how to make the right choice for their children. This will involve in-store information, online tutorials and content, and training and engagement of their employees, as well as Tweenangel and WiredMoms reviews of their favorite products.

- Xbox and Microsoft have developed the Pact, a contract for parents and their children that addresses time spent playing games and using media and rules. The Pact can be customized for each family and each child. They have also created an advisory board that includes one of our Teenangels and me.

- MTV's A Thin Line campaign started with a survey on teens and young adult practices and risks related to sexting and cyberbullying. A documentary program on

the consequences of sexting for both those taking the nude picture and those forwarding it was broadcast with a wide viewership. The athinline.org site engages young people and challenges them to take charge. It informs them what to do when they encounter cyberbullying, how to respect themselves and others and how to tell when their actions and those of others have “crossed the line.” They address cyberspying by friends and romantic partners and the right of privacy.

- Seventeen Magazine has announced a large campaign to activate and empower youth especially girls and young women, to tackle cyberbullies and step up when they see others being harmed online. I will be working with them on this campaign, as will my Teenangels

- Liz Claiborne expanded its free dating abuse campaign and curricula to include digital dating abuse, asking me to create that segment of the curricula (loveisnotabuse.org).

- Taser International is creating cybersafety and cyberbullying training and resources for members of law enforcement using their certified trainers. They are also helping develop resources for local law enforcement agencies and community policing agents to use in delivering programs to their communities on cybersafety and cyberbullying. Having learned about the concerns parents and the law enforcement community had addressing distracted driving risks and cyberbullying and other cell phone-related abuses, Taser developed a cell phone and in-car technology to prevent driver cell phone and other distractions and to give parents better control and ability to supervise their children’s cell phone activities, including prohibiting the sharing of “sext” images and receipt of phone calls from strangers. The two products will be released this year and are part of a broader campaign to address risks to our families.

- Microsoft Window funded a comprehensive cybersafety and cyberbullying awareness and educational initiative for the Girl Scouts of the USA entitled “Let Me Know” or “LMK” developed by me using our Congressionally-honored Teenangels program as the model. (This is intended to serve the 2 million plus members of Girl Scouts.)

- The gaming companies, such as Lego, FunTank (Candystand.com), Zynga, Disney, Nickelodeon, and Nintendo are developing technologies and methods to better protect their users of all ages. Specifically, Nickelodeon is teaching parents and young users how to use games and online networks in safer ways and to avoid being the target of a cyberbully. Zynga (of Farmville and Mafia Wars fame) is developing safety messaging on game bullying, security and safety with WiredSafety and with me. Nintendo added parental controls to its DSi to help parents better address their concerns.

- Disney uses its TV programming and product messaging to teach safer web surfing and cyberbullying prevention, including on its netbooks and Club Penguin. Disney has created a corps of kids who act as “secret agents” to Club Penguin to spot cyberbullying and other code of conduct violations in the game. I worked with them on a segment of HGTV’s Designing Spaces where I appeared helping a Florida parent understand the best way to create a “cybersafe” room for her son and together with Teenangels in 1998 helped design Toowtown’s safety features.

- The community approach, where the millions of users are engaged in looking out for themselves and others, is becoming more robust and filters adopted by Build-A-Bear Workshop help prevent their younger users of buildabearville.com from targeting each other. They partnered with us in StopCyberbullying month last year, offering in-store materials for parents and pledges for children and added a “stop, block and tell!” move in their game to help make cyberbullying awareness fun. They are founding members of the StopCyberbullying Coalition and Maxine herself blogs to her millions of fans about what parents need to know to keep their kids safer.

- KidZui is delivering our Sumo-Wrestler Panda Cybersafety animations, teaching children how to avoid and respond to cyberbullying.

- AOL is heavily involved in supporting mom digital literacy and awareness and is a sponsor of WiredMoms, WiredSafety’s mom group with more than 70,000 followers on Twitter (@wiredmom and @wiredmoms)

- Cisco commissioned us to create cybersafety guides for kids, tweens, teens and parents for promotion on their sites and other sites online.

- Ceridian and IBM commissioned me to create a tour of the teens’ Internet for parents in video and podcast/audio formats as an employee benefit for IBM employees worldwide and US military families.

- Microsoft sponsored the development of the Alex Wonder Kid CyberDetective Agency Bootcamp Computer Game, teaching tweens how to identify and address cyberbullying as well as our first Marvel Internet Superheroes Comic on cyberbullying.

- In 2004, Marvel donated an exclusive license to use Spiderman, The Incredible Hulk and others in their Superhero studio in comics offering cybersafety, security and digital technology-related issues.
- Adobe donates expertise to us on special-needs accessibility to allow for adaptation of cybersafety materials and resources for the families of special-needs children and the children themselves.
- Google and Yahoo! support public service messaging and search promotions to select Internet child safety advocacy groups.
- Oracle operates Think.com, a popular educational resource for educators on digital use and empowerment.

Socially safety

Finally, many general audience industry leaders have started to provide cyberbullying training for their moderators and address cyberbullying risks through programs and policies. In the case of those sites designed exclusively as tween and preteen networks, in addition to complying with COPPA, many are delivering materials to parents and schools, as well as resources directed to their preteen audiences. The Socially Safe Best Practice Seal and the Socially Safe Kids Seal are providing a framework for safety, best practices and risk-management to the Internet, online game and digital technology provider industries. In addition we are delivering training and certification programs for moderators and, together with privacy and security think tank experts, will launch Pathway, a screening and moderation technology for use by networks, game sites and technology providers to help monitor their services and deliver a safer environment and experience. These steps go a long way to help professionalize Internet safety and best practices.

This new approach of branding safety and best practices works because, in addition to being good for communities, families and schools, keeping all users, especially children safer is also good for business. Trusted brand names and responsible newer companies recognize these opportunities and their responsibilities to their customers, users and the community. A representative of Google, while speaking at one of our StopCyberbullying Coalition events, stated that creating safer networks is “an issue of competition.” If your competitors are helping make things safer, you have to as well. That was welcomed news. But while it may be a competitive advantage to make your networks and technologies safer, it also makes sense to join forces with and cooperate with your competition and all industry players to create safer online environments and better prepared young people and parents. An example on how they are working together for the good of all Internet and digital technology users is our StopCyberbullying Coalition. The StopCyberbullying Coalition is a multi-stakeholder group organized by WiredSafety and run by me to bring together all viewpoints and expertise to tackle this growing problem from all perspectives. Without the creativity, access, distribution channels and support of the above-mentioned companies and many more, non-profits, schools and families would not have the help they need to address cyberbullying, cyberhate and the harassment of minors in the digital world.

Conclusion

Thank you for including my testimony on this critically important issue for our nations’ youth. Cyberbullying is reaching epidemic proportions, touching kids at every age and grade level. Thankfully many within industry, schools and communities have begun to answer the call to provide training programs, materials, and educational efforts to “Stop Cyberbullying”. I stand ready to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have and provide additional information and offer the support of both WiredSafety and its thousands of volunteers.

APPENDIX TO TESTIMONY OF PARRY AFTAB, ESQ.

Snapshot of U.S. minors online and cyberbullying

It is estimated that approximately 93% of minors in the United States 10 and older access the Internet either from home, schools, community centers and libraries or from some newer Internet-capable device. This is up more than fifteen-fold since 1996, when only 6 million U.S. minors were online. Now our children are using cell phones with video and camera features as well as Internet and text-capability, iPhones and iPads with cell phone-like features, interactive gaming devices (such as Xbox and Sony Playstation 3) with voice-over-Internet, webcams and live chat features, handheld devices with Internet, Bluetooth and other remote-communication technology (such as DS and DSi), community broadcasts like Twitter and social networking profiles (such as Facebook, MySpace and myYearbook) where they can share their thoughts, when they last brushed their teeth, and anything else they want the world (or their closest friends) to know.

Fifteen years ago, when our volunteers first began helping victims of cyberbullying and cyberharassment things were easier. There was one way to access the Internet—a computer with a slow dial-up modem. The Internet was too rare and access to expensive for kids and teens to use and “central locations where parents could oversee their kids’ surfing made sense. But this has changed radically over these few short years. Now our kids and teens have more power in their backpacks, pockets and purses than large corporations had a few years ago. They have “apps” for everything, change their status on Facebook, share pictures on Flickr, Tweet, upload videos on YouTube, send thousands of texts (and sometimes “sexts”) and live out-loud online.

Now, instead of looking over our children’s shoulders when they are connected, we have to teach our children to use the “filter between their ears” and exercise good judgment and care when using any interactive device wherever they are and however they are connected. While teaching parents how to supervise their children online was a challenge, teaching children to “ThinkB4uClick” is much harder.

When I was growing up (in the days before electricity and indoor plumbing, when we had to walk up hill, both ways in blizzards to get to school), parents used to blame us for not behaving. We were disciplinary problems. Now pediatric neuro-psychologists tell us that preteens and teens are hardwired, through immature brain development, to be unable to control their impulses at this age. Either way, we recognize that preteens and teens take risks, don’t appreciate the consequences of their actions and act before they think. This puts them at risk for many things, including, but not limited to being cyberbullied or being the cyberbully. (Often the only difference between the two is which clicked the mouse last.)

Thirteen years ago, when I first wrote the first book in the world on Internet safety for parents and told them to put the computer in a “central location,” that made sense. It was a central point, where parents could get involved and supervise their children’s interactive communications and surfing activities. Now, where they are connected through handheld devices, cell phones and game boxes, it is no longer relevant. 9

In middle school and elementary school, we call it “cyberbullying.” High schoolers think that “cyberbullying” is a middle school thing and they are too mature for it. They call the same activities that constitute “cyberbullying” “digital drama” or “digital abuse.”

Statistics and a Snapshot of Cyberbullying Trends

A few years ago, I visited schools around the U.S. doing presentations to students in elementary, middle and high schools. During each presentation, I asked students if they had been cyberbullied. Instead of asking that way, since each student defines cyberbullying in different ways, I listed the kinds of things that constitute cyberbullying, asking if they had experienced any of those. (They included having someone access your profile, posting something hateful and then changing your password so you can’t remove it, passing vicious rumors, posing as you and saying mean things to your friends or breaking up with your girlfriend or boyfriend, etc.) I spoke to a total of more than 44,000 middle school students and no matter where I went in the U.S.; I never found less than 85% of the students reporting that they had been cyberbullied at least once. In a much smaller poll, 70% of the students polled admitted to having cyberbullied someone else at least once. Students are inventive and cyberbullying is often a “crime of convenience, “committed when they are bored, jealous, vengeful or looking for an audience.

Cyberbullying spans all digital technologies, from cell phones where students may grab an unattended cellphone and reprogram the victim’s best friend’s or romantic interest’s number to their cell number. Then they send a mean text message that would come up as the best friend or a break-up message ostensibly from their girlfriend or boyfriend. The victim would blame their friend and two students are victimized for the price of one cyberbullying tactic. (They should spend half the time studying as they do dreaming up these kinds of schemes!)

Key statistics on cyberbullying from stopcyberbullying.org and teenangels:

- 85% of middle schoolers polled reported being cyberbullied at least once.
- 70% of teens polled reported cyberbullying someone else.
- 86% of elementary school students share their password with their friend(s).
- 70% of teens polled said they share their password with their boyfriend/girlfriend or best friend. (Sharing your password is the digital generation’s equivalent of a “friendship ring.”)
- Cyberbullying starts in 2nd
- 3rd grade and peaks in 4th grade and again in 7th-9th grade.
- Only 5% of middle schoolers would tell their parents if they were cyberbullied.
- Middle schoolers have identified 63 different reasons not to tell their parents.

- Teens have identified 71 different ways to cyberbully someone.
- Cellphones are used 38% of the time in cyberbullying incidents.
- Social networks are used 39% of the time in cyberbullying incidents.
- Password theft or misuse accounts for 27% of cyberbullying. (There is overlap between this and social networking cyberbullying.)
- The number of cyberbullying and sextbullying (when sexting incidents are used to intentionally destroy a minor's reputation and self-esteem) is increasing rapidly.
- 52% of boys in high school reported having seen at least one nude image of a classmate.

MTV's wonderful multi-year campaign to address cyberbullying, digital dating abuse and sexting risks was launched in late 2009 and can be found at athinline.org. It explains the scope of the teen and young adult issues. I serve as a member of its advisory board, along with Casi Lumbra, one of my Teenangels.¹⁰

- 1000 Wisconsin teens identified cyberbullying as a risk or a serious risk.
- An equal percentage of boys and girls admit to taking and sharing a sext of themselves.
- 71% of girls use their webcam in their bedroom, and 21% regret something they did on a webcam.
- 5% of 10–12 yr olds polled admitted to taking and sharing a sexually provocative or nude photo of themselves.
- Within a 48 hour period, more than 200,000 myYearbook users took a pledge against cyberbullying.

What are the different types of cyberbullies?

It is impossible to change behavior when no one understands what is behind it. Cyberbullying occurs for the same reasons schoolyard bullying occurs. It also occurs by accident when students are careless about cyber communications. It might come from impulsive and thoughtless reactions to something that has upset the "cyberbully." They may be defending themselves and each other from offline bullies or other cyberbullies. Lumping them all together will lead nowhere, fast.

Every type of cyberbullying requires a different response and method of prevention

The four types of cyberbullies include:

- The Vengeful Angel
- The Power-Hungry (or Revenge of the Nerds sub-type)
- The Mean Girls
- The Inadvertent Cyberbully "The Vengeful Angel": In this type of cyberbullying, the cyberbully doesn't see themselves as a bully at all. They see themselves as righting wrongs, or protecting themselves or others from the "bad guy" they are now victimizing. The Vengeful Angel cyberbully often gets involved trying to protect a friend who is being bullied or cyberbullied. They generally work alone, but may share their activities and motives with their close friends and others they perceive as being victimized by the person they are cyberbullying.

Vengeful Angels need to know that no one should try and take justice into their own hands. They need to understand that few things are clear enough to understand, and that fighting bullying with more bullying only makes things worse. They need to see themselves as bullies, not the do-gooder they think they are. It also helps to address the reasons they lashed out in the first place. If they sense injustices, maybe there really are injustices. Instead of just blaming the Vengeful Angel, solutions here also require that the situation be reviewed to see what can be done to address the underlying problem. Is there a place to report bullying or cyberbullying? Can that be done anonymously? Is there a peer counseling group that handles these matters? What about parents and school administrators. Do they ignore bullying when it occurs, or do they take it seriously? The more methods we can give these kinds of cyberbullies to use official channels to right wrongs, the less often they will try to take justice into their own hands.¹¹

The "Power-Hungry" and "Revenge of the Nerds": Just as their schoolyard counterparts, some cyberbullies want to exert their authority, show that they are powerful enough to make others do what they want and some want to control others with fear. Sometimes they just don't like the other kid. These are no different than the offline tough schoolyard bullies, except for their method. Power-Hungry cyberbullies usually need an audience. It may be a small audience of their friends or those within their circle at school. Often the power they feel when only cyberbullying someone is not enough to feed their need to be seen as powerful and intimidating. They often brag about their actions. They want a reaction, and without one may escalate their activities to get one.

Interestingly enough, a sub type of the Power-Hungry cyberbully is often the victim of typical offline bullying. They may be female, or physically smaller, the ones

picked on for not being popular enough, or cool enough. They may have greater technical skills. Some people call this type the “Revenge of the Nerds” cyberbully. It is their intention to frighten or embarrass their victims. And they are empowered by the anonymity of the Internet and digital communications and the fact that they never have to confront their victim. They may act tough online, but are not tough in real life. They are often not a bully but “just playing one on TV.”

This kind of cyberbullying usually takes place one-on-one and the cyberbully often keeps their activities secret from their friends. If they share their actions, they are doing it only with others they feel would be sympathetic. The rarely appreciate the seriousness of their actions, and often resort to cyberbullying-by proxy. Because of this and their tech skills, it can be the most dangerous of all cyberbullying.

Power-Hungry cyberbullies often react best when they know that few things are ever anonymous online. We leave a trail of cyber-breadcrumbs behind us wherever we go in cyberspace. And, with the assistance of a law enforcement or legal subpoena, we can almost always find the cyber-abusers and cybercriminals in real life. Shining a bright light on their activities helps too. When they are exposed, letting the school community know about their exposure helps prevent copycat cyberbullying.

Helping them to realize the magnitude of their activities is also helpful. Often their activities rise to the criminal level. The more this type of cyberbully understands the legal consequences of their actions, the more they think about their actions.

Ignoring them can also be very effective. But sometimes, instead of going away when ignored, they escalate their actions to get others involved, through a cyberbullying-by-proxy situation. Whenever a Power-Hungry cyberbully is suspected, it is crucial that law enforcement is notified and that the victim keeps a careful watch on themselves online, through “googling themselves.” They can even set a Google Alert to notify them by e-mail if anything new is posted online with their personal contact information.¹²

“Mean Girls”: The type of cyberbullying occurs when the cyberbully is bored or looking for entertainment. It is largely ego-based and the most immature of all cyberbullying types. Typically, in Mean Girls bullying situations, the cyberbullies are female. They may be bullying other girls (most frequently) or boys (less frequently).

Mean Girls cyberbullying is usually done, or at least planned, in a group, either virtually or together in one room. It may occur from a school library or a slumber party or from the family room of someone after school. This kind of cyberbullying requires an audience. The cyberbullies in a Mean Girls situation want others to know who they are and that they have the power to cyberbully others. This kind of cyberbullying grows when fed by group admiration, cliques or by the silence of others who stand by and let it happen. It quickly dies if they don’t get the entertainment value they are seeking.

The most effective tool in handling a Mean Girls cyberbullying case is blocking controls. Block them, block all alternate screen names and force them to go elsewhere for their sick entertainment. In addition, if threatened with loss of their Facebook or AIM accounts, they wise up fast!

In all cases of which I am aware, the sexting and cyberbullying-suicides and attempted suicides in the US involved Mean Girls cyberbullies.

The “Inadvertent Cyberbully”: Inadvertent cyberbullies usually don’t think they are cyberbullies at all. They may be pretending to be tough online, or role playing, or they may be reacting to hateful or provocative messages they have received. Unlike the Revenge of the Nerds cyberbullies, they don’t lash out intentionally. They just respond without thinking about the consequences of their actions.

They may feel hurt, or angry because of a communication sent to them, or something they have seen online. And they tend to respond in anger or frustration. They don’t think before clicking “send.”

Sometimes, while experimenting in role-playing online, they may send cyberbullying communications or target someone without understanding how serious this could be. They do it for the heck of it “Because I Can.” They do it for the fun of it. They may also do it to one of their friends, joking around. But their friend may not recognize that it is another friend or may take it seriously. They tend to do this when alone, and are mostly surprised when someone accuses them of cyberabuse.

They also may be careless, typing too fast and being unclear or leaving our crucial words, like “not.” They may send a message to the wrong person or hurt someone by accident.

Education plays an important role in preventing Inadvertent Cyberbullying. Teaching them to respect others and to be sensitive to their needs is the most effective.

tive way of dealing with this kind of cyberbully. Teaching them to Take5! is an easy way to help them spot potentially bullying behavior before it's too late.¹³

Methods of cyberbullying

Kids have always tormented each other. Just think about Lord of the Flies. Now with the help of cybertechnologies, sadly, they are doing it more and more online, using mobile phones and interactive games. I spend as much time protecting kids from each other online these days as from cyberpredators. What is Cyberbullying?: Cyberbullying is any cyber-communication or publication posted or sent by a minor online, by instant messenger, e-mail, website, diary site, online profile, interactive game, handheld device, cell phone or other interactive device that is intended to frighten, embarrass, harass or otherwise target another minor. If there aren't minors on both sides of the communication, it is considered cyberharassment, not cyberbullying. A one-time rude or insulting communication sent to a minor is generally not considered cyberbullying. Cyberbullying needs to be repeated, or a threat of bodily harm, or a public posting designed to hurt, embarrass or otherwise target a child.

How does it work?: There are two kinds of cyberbullying: direct attacks (messages sent to your kids directly) and cyberbullying by proxy (using others to help cyberbully the victim, either with or without the accomplice's knowledge). Because cyberbullying by proxy often gets adults involved in the harassment, it is much more dangerous.

Direct attacks

1. Instant Messaging/E-mail/Text Messaging/Inbox or PM Harassment
2. Kids may send hateful or threatening messages to other kids without realizing that unkind or threatening messages are hurtful and very serious.
3. Warning/Report Abuse/Notify Wars—Many Internet Service Providers offer a way of reporting or “telling on” a user who is saying inappropriate things. Kids often engage in “warning wars” which can lead to kicking someone offline for a period of time. While this should be a security tool, kids sometimes use the Warn/Notify/Report Abuse buttons as a game or prank.
4. A kid/teen may create a screen name that is very similar to another kid's name. The name may have an additional “i” or one less “e.” It might use a lowercase “L” instead of the number “1.” They may use this name to say inappropriate things to other users while posing as the other person.
 - a. Text wars, text-bombs, or text attacks occur when kids gang up on the victim, sending thousands of text messages to the victim's cellphone or other mobile device. The victim is then faced with a huge cellphone bill and angry parents.
 - b. Kids send death threats using IM and text messaging as well as photos/videos (see below).

Stealing passwords

- a. A kid may steal another child's password and begin to chat with other people, pretending to be the other kid. He/she may say mean things that offend and anger this person's friends or even strangers. Meanwhile, the others won't know it is not really that person they are talking to.¹⁴
- b. A kid may also use another kid's password to change his/her profile to include sexual, racist, and inappropriate things that may attract unwanted attention or offend people.
- c. A kid often steals the password and locks the victim out of their own account.
- d. Once the password is stolen, hackers may use it to hack into the victim's computer.
- e. A stolen password can allow the cyberbully to steal points, loot, and game “gold.”

Blogs

Blogs are online journals. They are a fun way for kids and teens to post messages for all of their friends to see. However, kids sometimes use these blogs to damage other kids' reputations or invade their privacy. For example, in one case, a boy posted a bunch of blogs about his breakup with his ex-girlfriend, explaining how she destroyed his life and calling her degrading names. Their mutual friends read about this and criticized her. She was embarrassed and hurt, all because another kid posted mean, private, and false information about her. Sometimes kids set up a blog or profile page pretending to be their victim and saying things designed to humiliate them.

Websites

a. Children used to tease each other in the playground; now they do it on websites. Kids sometimes create websites that may insult or endanger another child. They create pages specifically designed to insult another kid or group of people.

b. They select and register domain names designed to inflame or otherwise hurt their victims.

c. Kids also post other kids' personal information and pictures, putting those people at a greater risk of being contacted or found.

Sending pictures through e-mail and cellphones

a. There have been cases of teens sending mass e-mails to other users that include nude or degrading pictures of other teens. Once an e-mail like this is sent, it is passed around to hundreds of other people within hours. There is no way of controlling where it goes.

b. Many of the newer cellphones allow kids to send pictures to each other. The kids receive the pictures directly on their phones and may send them to everyone in their address books. After viewing the picture at a website, some kids have actually posted these often pornographic pictures online for anyone to see, spread, or download.

c. Kids often take a picture of someone in a locker room, bathroom, or dressing room and post it online or send it to others on cellphones.

Internet polling

Who's hot? Who's not? Who is the biggest slut in the sixth grade? These types of questions run rampant on the Internet polls; all created by yours truly—kids and teens. Such questions are often very offensive to others and are yet another way that kids can bully other kids online.¹⁵

Interactive gaming

Many kids today are playing interactive games on gaming devices such as Xbox 360 and Sony PlayStation 3, Nintendo DS, and Sony PSP. These gaming devices may allow students to communicate with anyone they find themselves matched with in an online game or people within a certain defined physical area. Sometimes the kids verbally abuse the other kids, using threats and lewd language. Sometimes they take it further, locking them out of games, passing false rumors about them, or hacking into their accounts.

Sending malicious code

Many kids will send viruses, spyware, and hacking programs to their victims. They do this to either destroy their computers or spy on their victim. Trojan horse programs allow the cyberbully to remotely control their victim's computer and can be used to erase the victim's hard drive.

Sending porn and other junk e-mail and IMs

Cyberbullies often will sign up their victims for e-mail and IM marketing lists, lots of them, especially porn sites. When the victim receives thousands of e-mails from pornographers, their parents usually get involved, either blaming them (assuming they have been visiting porn sites) or making them change their e-mail or IM address.

Impersonation/posing

Posing as the victim, the cyberbully can do considerable damage. While posing as the victim, they may post a provocative message in a hate group's chatroom or on their forum pages, inviting an attack against the victim, often giving the name, address, and telephone number of the victim to make the hate group's job easier. They often also send a message to someone saying hateful or threatening things while masquerading as the victim. They may also alter a message really from the victim, making it appear that they have said nasty things or shared secrets with others.

Social networking attacks

Most teens (and many preteens) are using social networks such as MySpace and Facebook. They build a profile and share whatever they want to share with the world or their close friends. They post pictures and videos (especially on video networks like YouTube), pass rumors, exclude those they want to target, create quizzes and polls, and use anonymous networks (such as JuicyCampus.com) or applications such as Honesty Box to attack their victims. They impersonate their victims, take over their accounts, or report them to their school, parents, or the police.

Aside from cellphones, social networking is the technology of choice for cyberbullying and harassment.

Misappropriation of cellphones

While the predominant method used to cyberbully someone through a cellphone is texting and prank calling, students are lifting an unattended cellphone and re-programming it to do their dirty work. 16

Cyberbullying by proxy (third party cyberharassment or cyberbullying)

Often people who misuse the Internet to target others do it using accomplices. These accomplices, unfortunately, are often unsuspecting. They know they are communicating irate or provocative messages, but don't realize that they are being manipulated by the real cyberharasser or cyberbully. That's the beauty of this type of scheme. The attacker merely prods the issue by creating indignation or emotion on the part of others, and can then sit back and let others do their dirty work. Then, when legal action or other punitive actions are taken against the accomplice, the real attacker can claim that they never instigated anything and no one was acting on their behalf. They claim innocence and blame their accomplices, unwitting or not; their accomplices have no legal leg to stand on.

It's brilliant and very powerful. It is also one of the most dangerous kinds of cyberharassment or cyberbullying. Children do this often using AOL, MSN, or another ISP as their "proxy" or accomplice. When they engage in a "notify" or "warning" war, they are using this method to get the ISP to view the victim as the provocateur. A notify or warning war is when one child provokes another until the victim lashes back. When they do, the real attacker clicks the warning or notify button on the text screen. This captures the communication and flags it for the ISP's review. If the ISP finds that the communication violated their terms of service agreement (which most do), they may take action. Some accounts allow several warnings before formal action is taken, but the end result is the same. The ISP does the attacker's dirty work when they close or suspend the real victim's account for a terms of service violation. Most knowledgeable ISPs know this and are careful to see if the person being warned is really being set up.

Sometimes children use the victim's own parents as unwitting accomplices. They provoke the victim and, when the victim lashes back, they save the communication and forward it to the victim's parents. The parents often believe what they read and, without having evidence of the prior provocations, think that their own child "started it."

This works just as easily in a school disciplinary environment.

Students may not understand that their attacks, if designed to hurt someone's reputation, may be defamatory and subject them to discipline, lawsuits, and in some cases harassment charges. They may not understand that they can be tracked quite easily most of the time and held accountable for their actions. They may not understand that their actions may be a terms of service violation and cost them (or their family) their online accounts. They may repeat rumors and take action based on false information, and then find themselves facing liability when the person who started it all hides behind them. They should know that repeating lies, even if you read them online, is no excuse under the law.

WiredSafety advises not to respond to cyberbullying. So, it is important that we caution to all who believe things without confirming their accuracy not to confuse silence or failure to defend or rebut any rumors with an admission of guilt or confirmation that a lie told by someone is true. Sometimes silence is smarter, especially when the real fight may not occur online at all. The smarter ones don't fight their battles in public online, not when defamation, cyberbullying or harassment is involved.¹⁷

Just a reminder to teach students to thinkB4uClick. Otherwise they have become what they say they are fighting. They have become a cyberharasser or cyberbully themselves. Teach them not to be used. Teach them to use their heads.

The problem with some prominent surveys

Major survey companies and educational institutions have studied cyberbullying. While they all conclude that cyberbullying is a serious and growing problem, they (in our opinion) under-report the problem. It's not their fault. It's the nature of how surveys with minors are conducted. Most take place after the parents are asked for their permission to survey their kids. Since there are 57 different reasons identified by students for why they would not tell their parents if targeted by a cyberbully, it is unlikely that they will be candid with the surveyor in their parents' presence or after their parents are informed about the survey.

The second problem with the surveys is that they ask, "Have you been cyberbullied?," without defining what they mean. Like "obscenity," which, according to a former U.S. Supreme Court Justice, "you know it when you see it," it's easier for people to spot than to define. But many students think that harassment and cru-

elty online comes with the territory, and unless it's a death threat or text-bomb (see Talk the Talk), it's not cyberbullying. For any survey to be effective, it needs to define situations that constitute cyberbullying and ask the students if they have ever been involved in one of those situations.

Interestingly, students are more likely to own up to being a cyberbully than a victim.

A Conspiracy to Conceal It WiredSafety's surveys reflect that only 5% of students would tell their parents if they were being targeted by a cyberbully. When Teenangels conducted a survey of their own, they learned that less than 25% of the students would tell anyone if they were being cyberbullied.

Why? The answer is different for parents than another trusted adult. Parents have the power to make their lives miserable. They can turn off the Internet, take away cellphones, computers, and gaming devices, pick up the phone and call other parents, the school, or their lawyers. They run too hot and overreact, or too cold and underestimate the pain the cyberbully causes.

The students don't want their parents to discover that they are not as popular in school as hoped. They don't want to look like they can't take care of themselves. They don't want their parents to find out that they were doing things they shouldn't or to learn the information the cyberbully is threatening to expose.

Parents might start monitoring or filtering everything, spying, or being overly attentive to what the student is doing online. The parents may demand passwords to all accounts and use them, confront the cyberbully or their parents, call the police, or blow things out of proportion. The cyberbullying may become the topic of discussion over the Thanksgiving table or the source of teasing or bullying by siblings.

If their current or former friends were the cyberbullies, the victim, interestingly, may try and protect them or avoid having them punished. They don't want to be termed a "tattletale" or have the cyberbully18 escalate their actions because they "told." They may have responded using inappropriate language or threats of their own. The list goes on and on. They are reluctant to share with their "friends" and not sure if the cyberbully is one of those in whom they are confiding. With anonymous cyberbullying they can't be sure if the cyberbully is their best friend or worst enemy. Friends are armed with their secrets and passwords and sometimes the cyberbully poses as one of their friends. They don't know where to turn or whom to trust.

Trusting their teachers, guidance counselors, and school administrators is a bit different. In this case, they worry that the school will refuse to get involved. (This fear is often well-founded.) They fear their uninformed involvement even more. When well-meaning school administrators get involved, they often call everyone in and try to get to the bottom of things. This only makes things worse and sets up the victim for more harassment from the cyberbully, their friends, and everyone in the class who sees the victim as "squealing."

Even when the school administrators do the right thing, it can backfire. On a recent Tyra Banks Show, Parry met a young student who had reported her classmates taking her picture with their cellphone while in the locker room at school. (She and other girls were dancing in various stages of undress.) The cyberbully threatened to post the pictures on Facebook and the girl panicked and went to the principal, who promptly called in the girls and confiscated the cellphone. The entire class turned on the victim, saying she had blown it all out of proportion. She was victimized twice—once by the girls and again by the class.

An interesting exercise for students is to ask them to see how many reasons they can come up with why they wouldn't tell their parents about being cyberbullied. Parry has never gotten them to come up with more than 57 different reasons. See if you can beat her record and share the reasons you find. They can be illuminating. If we understand why they don't share this or trust their parents, we can find ways to address their concerns and change this pattern. We can also find ways to make sure that they trust guidance counselors, teachers, and school administrators so they don't have to face this alone.

The challenge we all face is how we can intervene without feeding the cyberbullies. There are no easy answers on this one, just some approaches that have worked for others. An effective strategy is to get peer counselors involved and create a cyberbullying taskforce for the school, including students in crafting responses and consequences of cyberbullying activities. Make sure you include the consequences for bystanders.

Whatever you do, do it carefully and thoughtfully. Ask the victim first before you take any action other than those needed to protect them or others. Remember, cyberbullying hurts. The first thing we need to do is address that hurt. Bring in the guidance counselors to help. The more advance preparation and planning the school does, the faster and better you can respond when these things occur.

Starting young—the Sumo Pandas

WiredSafety has created the Sumo Panda digital safety and cyberbullying prevention program to help teach cybersafety to kids from kindergarten to grade six. It uses a series of twelve short and cute Flash and Quicktime animations of the Pandas, their friends and rivals—the Polar Bears from Polar Bear Academy. Each animation is paired with a teaching kit that contains things like lesson plans, activity sheets, coloring pages, pledges, and lesson certificates

Artemus and his cousin, Precious Panda live in the Forest of Kind with their families. Artemus and Precious attend Panda Elementary School with the other animals in their forest and love to sumo wrestle in their spare time! Like any other kid, they also love to play online. Too bad Artemus isn't the most cyber savvy and Precious often has to guide him to find the right path. Unfortunately, Artemus is often influenced by his "friends" Herbert the panda and Chops the pig who don't always have his best interests at heart. Artemus is also often the target of cyberbullying by his rivals, the Polar Bears from Polar Bear Academy. But with the support of his true friends, especially Precious, Artemus always learns important lessons in cybersafety by the end of the day. Teaching them the consequences of their actions, and that the real "Men in Black" may show up at their front door sometimes helps too. Since many cyberbullying campaigns include some form of hacking or password or identity theft, serious laws are implicated. Law enforcement, including the FBI, might get involved in these cases. Remind your students that they could easily be implicated in a cyberbullying case commenced by one of their friends. (But be careful, this may end up backfiring if the kids are intrigued by what would happen if the FBI did knock on their door. It's happened.)

But few cyberbullying campaigns can succeed without the complacency and the often help of other kids. If no one votes at a cyber-bashing website, the cyberbully's attempts to humiliate the victim are thwarted. If no one forwards a hateful or embarrassing e-mail, the cyberbully is left standing all alone. It's rarely fun to act out unless you can show off to someone who will appreciate your antics. By denying the cyberbully an audience, the antics quickly stop.

In addition, the "mean girls" cyberbullies need an audience. That's the reason they do it, to show everyone that they can. It reinforces their social status and ranking. It reminds everyone who believes it that they can do anything they want to anyone they want. Denying them their audience and ego fix takes the fun out of cyberbullying. Hopefully they can then move on to something else a little less destructive.

If we can help kids understand how much bullying hurts, how in many cases (unlike the children's chant) words can hurt you, fewer may cooperate with the cyberbullies. They will think twice before forwarding a hurtful IM or e-mail, or visiting a cyberbullying "vote for the fat-girl" site, or allowing others to take videos or cell phone pictures of personal moments or compromising poses of others. And, in addition to not lending their efforts to continue the cyberbullying, if given an anonymous method of reporting cyberbullying websites, profiles and campaigns, students can help put an end to cyberbullying entirely. School administration, community groups and even school policing staff can receive these anonymous tips and take action quickly when necessary to shut down the site, profile or stop the cyberbullying itself. They can even let others know that they won't allow cyberbullying by supporting the victim, making it clear that they won't be used to torment others and that they care about the feelings of others is key. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

We need to teach our students that silence, when others are being hurt, is not acceptable. If they don't allow the cyberbullies to use them to embarrass or torment others, cyberbullying will quickly stop. It's a tall task, but a noble goal. And in the end, our students will be safer online and offline. We will have helped create a generation of good cybercitizens, controlling the technology instead of being controlled by it.

APPENDIX ON RESPONSES TO MASSACHUSETT'S MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY OF 500
STUDENTS ON TEXTING—2009

Student Survey—770 Middle and High School Wisconsin Students Winter 2010

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CYBERBULLYING?

Answer options	What is your grade?					Response percent
	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	
I don't know what it is	15	5	4	33	34	11.8%
It's no big deal	1	3	2	39	24	9.0%
I have heard about it on TV or in magazines, but don't know much more	4	17	17	63	42	18.6%
It happens in middle school only	0	3	1	2	4	1.3%
It's when you say mean things online, in a text or by IM	11	55	64	194	120	57.7%
It's when you take an embarrassing pic using a cell phone and send it to others to hurt someone	11	47	64	144	70	43.6%
I have heard about someone in my school or town that was cyberbullied	5	26	20	74	29	20.0%
Friends of mine have been cyberbullied, but I haven't	4	17	7	35	16	10.3%
We've had cyberbullying incidents in my school	3	21	16	69	29	17.9%
I have seen cyberbullying messages designed to hurt or embarrass someone else	3	20	20	83	44	22.1%
I have cyberbullied others	0	3	2	7	18	3.9%
I have said nasty things to others online, but don't consider it cyberbullying	0	4	14	29	22	9.0%
I have been cyberbullied by a close friend	1	9	4	23	13	6.5%
I have had someone steal my password and pretend to be me	0	14	13	40	24	11.8%
I have had someone cyberbully me on Facebook	0	5	4	18	14	5.3%
I have seen others cyberbullied on Facebook	2	9	7	64	28	14.3%
I should report cyberbullying to the FBI	0	20	5	20	8	6.9%
I know how to report cyberbullying to Facebook and other sites	3	18	20	51	24	15.1%
You can be arrested if you cyberbully someone	3	35	29	70	29	21.6%
Teens have committed suicide when they were cyberbullied	5	46	60	138	57	39.7%
I've cyberbullied someone with my friends just for fun	0	1	6	20	12	5.1%
I have been harassed and embarrassed by text messages sent by others	2	11	15	33	15	9.9%

Chairwoman McCARTHY. Mr. Finnegan.

STATEMENT OF DAVE FINNEGAN, CHIEF INFORMATION AND LOGISTICS BEAR, BUILD-A-BEAR WORKSHOP

Mr. FINNEGAN. Good morning, Chairwoman McCarthy, Ranking Member Platts and Members of the subcommittee. My name is Dave Finnegan, I am the Chief Technology Bear at Build-A-Bear Workshop. I am honored to be the only one with “bear” in my title on the panel. I appreciate the invitation to come.

Build-A-Bear started in 1997 and has since grown to be the ninth largest toy retailer in the United States with over 400 stores worldwide. A number of years ago, we saw the play patterns of kids go from traditional play to a blend of on-line and off-line play. During that time, we launched a kids virtual space called buildabearville.com. Since then, we have grown to over 15 million Avatars, and we get roughly 4 to 5 million visits from kids each month. We have earned a number of awards in the space, including awards from iparenting, Wired Kids, and have earned Parry Aftab's socially safe seal from WiredSafety.

The Internet bullying, and cyber-bullying initiative is obviously from all the testimony that we have heard an important issue for kids, and because of that, it is an important issue for Build-A-Bear Workshop. We think that we are uniquely positioned in this space because we have stores that we can get the message out through.

We also think that if we can capture kids early on and teach them and help educate them early on and give them the tools that are needed, that we will serve them well, especially as they get into their teenage years.

So we believe that success comes when kids are educated and parents, as Dr. Phil indicated, are actively involved in their kids' Internet experience. We also believe that as we joined together, industry, lawmakers, educators and others that we have a lot of things that we can share together to help keep this space safe for kids.

So in October 2009, we launched a "Stop Cyber-Bullying Month" campaign where we taught kids and parents the importance of playing on line. To reach kids, we decided that we would reach them in their native place. So we went online and we created some educational games and quizzes that kids could take where once they were finished with those things, they earned different virtual prizes, including dance moves and things like that for their Avatars. Since that launch of that campaign online, we have had over 2.6 million impressions on the stop block and tell message from Parry's group. We have had over 165,000 of our guests who have taken the stop cyber-bullying pledge, and we have had over 200,000 kids take the cyber safe quiz.

We also took one of our store calendars and dedicated that calendar issue to the stop cyber-bullying pledge. So we put on something that we were already doing, we layered on all of the safety information about what we could do to make a difference. And we dedicated that calendar in October to that topic. We gave away 350,000 calendars that went into the hands of kids and moms and dads so they could talk about these topics together. That is what we did for kids.

From a parent's perspective, we reached out in more traditional media. Parents aren't online like their kids are. We reached out with online and traditional media. We created a family feature with content we got from Wired Kids to talk about how to open the dialogue between you and your kids about how to keep your family safe, and how to deal with cyber-bullying.

That was picked up by newspapers and magazines and we have reached about 70 million media impressions so far with this media campaign.

As we have been working on this issue, we have noticed something: We have noticed that there is a common thread, a shared commitment between industry and policymakers, educators all have the commitment to keep kids safe. We think, however, there is a huge opportunity to bring these organizations closer with events like this that allow us to share ideas and concepts.

To that end, last October we cosponsored an event on Capitol Hill, the Stop Cyber-Bullying event, in which we brought major companies and different organizations throughout the United States together to talk about this topic, to share ideas and to open up what we are doing from a technology perspective that we can share with others so that we can keep kids safe.

At Build-A-Bear Workshop, we are happy to stand shoulder to shoulder with kids and with parents, educators and policymakers and companies to help make a difference to kids online. We ap-

plaud the work that you are doing to help bring focus to this issue and we are happy to participate in any way we can.

[The statement of Mr. Finnegan follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Dave Finnegan, Chief Technology Bear,
Build-A-Bear Workshop, Inc.**

Build-A-Bear Workshop, Inc. is the only global company that offers an interactive make-your-own stuffed animal retail-entertainment experience. The company was founded in 1997 and currently operates more than 400 Build-A-Bear Workshop stores worldwide, including company-owned stores in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland and France, and franchise stores in Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, the Middle East, and Mexico.

Goal—Internet Safety and cyberbullying are important issues to Build-A-Bear Workshop and are especially relevant to protecting kids in this generation. We are committed to working together with other stakeholders to make the Internet a safer place for kids through education and awareness. Build-A-Bear Workshop partners with others to achieve the goal of providing safer internet spaces for kids.

In October of 2009, Build-A-Bear Workshop launched the “Stop Cyberbullying Month” campaign to reach kids and their parents with a cyber safety message in order to educate them on the importance of playing safely online. Our objective has been to be a part of the solution to stop cyberbullying.

The company is committed to children and families and protecting kids is paramount to us. We believe that to accomplish our goal we need the partnership of parents, kids, industry, policymakers, law enforcement and educators.

Reaching kids: Build-A-Bear Workshop is an organization that addresses and stops cyberbullying by diligently educating, equipping and monitoring our virtual space. The Build-A-Bear Workshop companywide Stop Cyberbullying program is comprised of several online, in store and media elements. The reason we employ a variety of tools is to ensure that we are able to reach as many kids as possible. We are educating kids by creating awareness of what they can do to protect themselves online. With our campaign, we generated 2,600,000 impressions with our “Stop, Block and Tell” event.

In addition, over 165,000 Guests have taken the Stop Cyberbullying pledge online and there have been over 200,000 Guests online who have taken our Cyber Safe Quiz to help them understand the best ways to remain cybersafe. We continue to add games and online tools to educate and integrate with their play. Reaching parents and others: Because Build-A-Bear Workshop believes that internet safety takes a commitment from the parent, we incorporated a number of communications channels to reach out to parents and others in the community with the Cyber Safety Message.

Since October 2009, 350,000 Instore Calendars have been distributed to Guests in stores throughout the country. In addition, media outreach has extended to print, online, broadcast and bloggers to achieve over 70,000,000 media impressions.

In addition to its outreach to kids and parents, Build-A-Bear Workshop has partnered with other key groups to communicate the message of cyber safety. In October 2009, the company sponsored the Stop CyberBullying Event, meeting with other corporate leaders and child advocacy groups in a first ever Coalition event in Washington D.C. on Capitol Hill. Experts representing many different areas of the cyber safety attended for the discussion along with Build-A-Bear Workshop and other companies to share cyber safety policies and practices.

We continue to partner with parents, policymakers and industry leaders to generate awareness and encourage internet safety. In order to reach the goal of providing safer internet spaces we propose that the industry, policy/law enforcement, teachers and educators, parents and children and internet safety organizations work together to strategize around this topic to implement the agreed upon outcomes.

For additional information please visit: <http://www.purnewmedia.com/2009/babw90930/index.html>

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you so much, thank you everybody for your testimony. I think everybody probably found it, number one, very enlightening. We can do a lot of research here, we have great people to do that for us, but again, I think when you have great people that come in front of us, and basically talk about the experiences they have had, I think about going back even be-

fore cyber-bullying was that popular, but Columbine, those shooters, those kids were all being bullied, so it can turn to violence.

We know that over 200,000 kids a day are not going to school because they are being bullied, and they are scared. We know that young people join gangs because they feel they need to be protected from bullying.

So these are the problems that society, and especially our young people are facing on a daily basis. And that is something that I feel that this committee should be very committed about, because again, these are our future leaders of this country. They are going to be here in Congress one day, they are going to be in the business world, and we have to make sure that they are very well adjusted. We have to make sure they are secure, mainly because you want them to have good, happy lives. And as Dr. Phil had mentioned, those affected by bullying, that is carried on for many, many, many years into their life, even when they are adults. And with any kind of wound like that, that can't be seen, it is something that will always be there and affect that person and could affect future relations, future—their children, so it is something that I believe is the time that we do something about it.

Dr. Phil, I know you have been talking about this on your show, I know you have mentioned that you have young people calling in, but overall, when you have people calling in or writing to you on letters, do you feel that the American public are seeing the crisis that, which I personally feel is a health care crisis by the way, are you feeling that you are getting through to the parents, because obviously, an awful lot of parents watch your show.

Mr. MCGRAW. Well, I think you have to answer that in a couple of ways. I think when you raise the awareness about it, very clearly, parents are surprised because they are not aware because their kids don't come to them and say this is happening to them. So they are simply not aware of it.

Once they are made aware of it, then all of a sudden, it becomes a priority for them, and they can support the child. One of the biggest mistakes we see, so often parents say look, this is just kids being kids, we can't run up there and get involved every time something like this happens. That is exactly the wrong attitude here. When a child is being isolated and attacked in this way, it is the loneliest time of their life. That is when they need someone to put an arm around their shoulder and say, look, I am here for you, I have got your back, we are going to figure a way to deal with this.

And I have had many bullies on the show, cyber-bullies on the show, and they invariably will say they had no idea the gravity this had on another student. They had no idea that it hurt them so deeply, I have had them on 10 years after the fact, and they see the devastation it caused in someone's life, even to the point that maybe they home schooled their children or they are over protective of them because they don't want to put them into the mix again. They are shocked at this.

So part of it is not just educating the parents and supporting the targets, but also counseling the bullies, the kids that would do this and their parents. These bullies have parents, we need to talk to

those parents to counsel their kids to teach them to be empathetic about the impact of what their doing.

And when we talk about that, I do see it get through, I do see it come through. The power of it comes from hearing from people like Dominique and those that are in that window, in that time frame that makes the biggest difference.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

And Dominique, we have you on this panel because you are the voice, you are on the ground, as they say, so with the program that you have been working with the Girl Scouts of America, how do you see your fellow students react to it? Is it positive? Do they give you suggestions on how to make it better?

Ms. NAPOLITANO. Well, I feel that people don't really want to look at the issue of cyber-bullying, people that are my age because I think they really feel that, you know, it's just something that you kind of, everyone kind of does. I mean, I don't partake in cyber-bullying, but I think a lot of people they just think oh, well, they are more focused on their self-image in school and about popularity rather than another person's feelings. So I think it is hard to get the message across because I don't think everyone wants to listen, but I think by showing the effects of cyber-bullying it's—I think it gives a more positive impact on people that are my age.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. One of the things, and I am not sure exactly yet, I believe it was Dr. Phil's testimony on keyboard bullies, namely because I think young people don't understand when they write something—I know that if I feel angry, I do not send out an e-mail. I can talk to someone and certainly let them know that I am dissatisfied, but for some reason, when you put it on a BlackBerry and before I push that send, I say this sounds terrible, that is not who I am, that is not what I am trying to do.

So I can even imagine that young people, when they are sending these things, and they might think they are even funny, they don't understand what the consequences are on the other end.

Mr. MCGRAW. You have an edit button a lot of people don't have. And children, certainly in their teens, their brains aren't through growing yet. And the last thing that grows is the inhibition center. So they don't have that edit button. So they do hit send. That is the problem. We need your edit button, is what we need.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. I agree. I wish I could use it all the time. I wish I had a big red button and just squash it. I am going to hold off so the rest of my committee can ask questions.

Mr. Platts.

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you, Madame Chair. Thanks to each of you. Just a wealth of knowledge that you have all shared with us, and some news that my son will—maybe one piece of news he will like and one that he won't that one of the things that came through, and Dr. Phil, you mentioned in your testimony that being from the old school, having to get up with today's times, that sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me, well, yeah, they can. And I have to admit to pleading guilty to having said that to my boys when the sibling rivalry is getting a little strong and say you have to take it. So I think Tom will be glad to hear that.

The one news he won't like as I mentioned, we are not ones who have given into the craze that everybody has to have a cell phone, so our boys don't, and we try to be very guarded where our computers are and our engagement with them.

And after hearing all of your testimonies, including the 67 ways to use a cell phone to bully, it might be a while, Tom. So sorry. I was overprotective before this hearing. I am even more overprotective after hearing all of the testimony.

Dominique, I wanted to, one, commend you and your classmates who rose to the occasion with your classmate Mary T, and turned what was a bullying effort into an important lesson that your students were sharing, teaching each other and rising to the defense of a classmate, even those who didn't really know her, but stood up to the individual who was bullying.

What do you, from your perspective as a teen—and as a parent, we would love to know this answer and I guess it is a tough one to come by—but that makes it hard for teens or any age children to talk to their parents that they are being bullied and to reach out for help as opposed to staying isolated and suffering in that isolation.

Ms. NAPOLITANO. I think the main reason why the person being cyber-bullied won't want to tell a parent is I think they are afraid that if the cyber-bully is notified that you know what they are doing is wrong and they are going to suffer a consequence from it. I think they are afraid what are other people going to think about me. And I think that is really the main reason is because they are kind of afraid of what are other people going to think. Are they going to side with me or side with the cyber-bully, and am I going to be cyber-bullied even more from it.

So I think that is really the main reason why they want help.

Mr. PLATTS. So a very simplistic sense that kind of tattletale, and you went and got somebody in trouble, and you will suffer more consequences in response.

So how for us to educate the kids that you need to come forward and educate other kids to see that as doing the right thing as opposed to the wrong thing.

Ms. Paris, you talked about your programs in your school and how you have educated yourself, and then with the NASSP. In what ways do you reach out to parents to try to give them that knowledge, or to engage them maybe, through your district to have that be at that partnership.

Ms. PARIS. We have parent summits, and it is interesting that—I am not denouncing what you said about Tom and his cell phone, but I spoke to 700 elementary school parents in my district a year and a half ago, and I asked them—it is elementary and middle—and I asked them to raise their hands if their child had a MySpace. And very few hands went up. And I told them how to find out if a child had a MySpace. And the next day, I had 200 e-mails from parents saying I had no idea. We don't even have a computer in the home, and my child has a MySpace account.

So just as I think Dr. Phil said, it is an awareness issue. Ninety percent of it is being aware of the impact of what is going on and what tools do we have. It is not good enough any more. I can't go to principals and say hey, this is a big problem. I need to be able

to go to principals and say I know you know that it is a big problem now. Epic problem now. Here are some things you can do preemptively, proactively to address the issue. And a big piece of that is educating your kids, educating your parents, getting them on board with the mission.

Mr. PLATTS. Just really kind of a basic, if more active the engagement of the parent and the knowledge sharing, the more likely then they are going to look into like the 200 e-mails go home and say hey, I didn't know, but now they do so they can be more aware.

Mr. MCGRAW. Congressman, one of the things that I would like to add to what Ms. Paris is saying, is we have to, as part of the education, we have to teach teachers how to intervene in these situations. I mean, they have to understand. We have got to put out a program that we talk about on the Dr. Phil Show is trying to teach kids that telling is not tattling. If you are going to a responsible adult and identifying, that is not tattling because we have taught our kids that is not the thing to do.

And we need to get them to understand, and I have written so extensively about this, and my son, Jay, wrote a New York Times best seller about bullying and how to stop it. And in there we talk about the fact that if you are watching someone bully someone else, cyber-bully or any other way, and you do nothing about it, you are as guilty as the person that is doing it. So you have to close the ranks and support.

And peer interventions don't help as far as them stepping up and saying "don't do this." But you have to support the target and you have to be willing to talk to the teachers and counselors and administrators. We have to get all of the bystanders involved.

Mr. PLATTS. In a sense in law school, we had a strict honor code where if you are aware of cheating and don't report it, you are then responsible as well. That mentality out there—with parents who I think one of the challenges is that the old guard, us guys who didn't grow up with all of this technology, that, you know, the parents kind of shrug it off.

What do you think is the best way to make the case? Is it telling the stories of what happened to parents who understand? This isn't something you can shrug off. It is a real threat to your kids.

Mr. MCGRAW. It truly is. It is not a talk that you have with your children. It is a dialogue. It is an ongoing dialogue. It is not something where you sit down to talk. You have to constantly be in a dialogue with them about what is happening and not only about whether or not someone is demeaning them or writing things about them or posting pictures, but also making sure that they are not part of this, that they are not doing that.

I have never talked to a parent of a bully that knew that their child was doing this. It is always, I had no idea they were picking on this child. I had no sense of it whatsoever. We have got to get them to talk about it. And the only way they can do this is they understand the technology, which a lot of us parents don't. They don't understand the Facebooks and all of that.

But that information is out there. I mean, if you go nowhere except to Parry and all of the things that you guys do, that is one-stop shopping right there. You get what you need to know right there.

Ms. AFTAB. If I may explain, cyber-bullying is not one thing. It is a lot of things. We found that 85 percent of the elementary school students share their password with at least one other person, and 70 percent of high schoolers do, especially the best friend or someone they are dating. If someone is armed with your secrets and your passwords they can do really serious destruction when tomorrow you hate each other which happens several times a day.

If we can deal with digital hygiene, teaching kids a password that is easy to use, not easy to guess, easy to remember. And the Girl Scouts came up with something they called designer passwords when we were doing the training. Twizzlers and Clueless, your favorite candy and your favorite movies. Something that you remember and other people won't. If we can lock other people out of their account, keep their passwords protected, use a good cybersecurity software. And if your son really wants a cell phone, I will introduce you to Taser with their new product on cell phone security that you can actually see what he's doing.

But if we can put it together so the easy things are out of there, so that the kids are better protected, better secured, we have locked our doors, then the rest is just behavioral.

And when we talked about Columbine, I was getting 10,000 e-mails a day from parents saying how do I know if my kids have one of those Web sites. My answer was ask. When we did a survey of kids who were using computer games, parents had no idea what they were doing on these computer games, that they could use Internet over phone. And I said to the kids would you tell your parents? They said sure, but they never ask.

Even though a dialogue is crucial, if you just start with, "Do you have one of these things?" and although it is hard to find the experts and none of the parents are, and frankly, I am not an expert on how the technology works. That is why I work with kids. Ask your teens. They are free and they do house calls. So what you say is if you want this new device for Christmas, tell me what it does. Three Cs: Content, contact and cost. Tell me what the content risks are, tell me what the contact, how you can talk to people, people can talk to you. Can you get into trouble by downloading music you are not supposed to be doing or something that is going to cost me money that I didn't agree to.

If the kids can answer those questions they might be old enough for it. My guess is that Tom can do that. And I will help you get him on to cell phones when you think he is ready.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. I hope my granddaughter is not watching because she will be 10 in October and for the last 3 years, she thought she could bully grandma into getting a phone and I said absolutely not.

Ms. AFTAB. Never underestimate the power of grandparents in this whole issue of bullying.

Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Madame Chair. I serve on this committee, Education and Labor, and also chair the crime subcommittee, so this has interest to me on this committee and also my other committee. And so I would like to start with Dr. Srabstein. Could you say a little bit about the effect of cyber-bul-

lying or bullying in general on suicide, dropping out of school, delinquency, and gang members.

Dr. SRABSTEIN. There is a whole array of medical, educational and risk problems associated with bullying and cyber-bullying. To start with, there are cross-sectional studies based on national prevalence in the United States that shows that at least 5 percent of U.S. adolescents may suffer from a combination of frequently occurring physical and emotional symptoms linked to their participation in bullying as bullies, perpetrators or bullies victims. With the latter, being the youngsters that have the worst broken noses, not only in terms of health problems but also in terms of death. And they are usually misunderstood because in school they will say, Well what do you expect, if you are doing this, this is what they are doing to you.

And we need to recognize that those children and adolescents and sometimes adults may have both situations. They are victims, and we need to support them and we need also to help them as a public health issue for them not to hurt others.

Now, the kind of array of problems may include a cluster of frequently occurring symptoms like depression, irritability, anxiety, headaches, stomachaches, dizziness, difficulty in sleeping. All of them happening at the same time. This is 5 percent of at least of U.S. adolescents grade 6 to 10 that may have these symptoms linked to their participation.

Now, within this group, 50 percent of them are at risk of hurting themselves. We don't know the rate of mortality. We do know that there are at least 250 cases of deaths reported in newspapers in the last decade. But that is just the tip of the iceberg. Furthermore, they are more at risk of suffering from accidental injuries besides the suicide attempts. They are more prone to abuse over-the-counter medication, get into fights, run away from home, and be frequently absent from school. And again, those that are bullies and victims are in the worst prognosis.

Mr. SCOTT. We know the problems that result from bullying. Do bullying prevention and intervention programs work? Can they be replicated? And while—I am going to run out of time—and do activities that involve live interaction like Girl Scouts and others, are they helpful in reducing cyber bullying and bullying generally?

Dr. SRABSTEIN. What we do now is a prevention intervention programs for the whole bullying at large, and cyber bullying is very much intertwined with bullying in general because it happens in different settings. We can probably apply that to cyber bullying as well although cyber bullying itself as it is being discussed this morning has its own peculiar aspects that doesn't happen in the other setting.

Mr. SCOTT. I want to know whether or not we are talking about putting something in ESEA, do the bullying prevention and intervention programs work and what should we be putting into ESEA?

Dr. SRABSTEIN. They only produce, in the best chance, up to 50 percent but in general, not more than 20 or 30 percent, and therefore, you need a three-level intervention: primary, secondary, and tertiary intervention having the whole village involved in this. It is not just the schools, health professionals, the parents, the whole

community. Primary prevention in terms of raising awareness and creating better environment in the schools.

Secondary intervention in terms of detection of incidents not only in the schools, but by all health professionals when they meet with children and adolescents for any particular reason being an accident or being just a regular physical just to ask them, explain to them that they are here concerned as health professionals that bullying is a problem, ask the children if they are being bullied and then ask them if they have any health problems related to that.

The problem remains in reporting this to the school because most of the kids are very afraid because of the culture of the reporting things, and so the last element is tertiary intervention. Many of the kids, no matter what may be done in the schools, especially the perpetrators, they may not be able to stop bullying even if they are sensitized and counseled for a lot of different reasons, including their impulsivity, mood instability and so on.

So at the end of the day, medical treatment of the tertiary provision may be needed.

Mr. SCOTT. I think some of the others wanted to answer if they could.

Ms. PARIS. The efficacy of the prevention program depends on the person who is implementing it. You will hear that 90 percent of the schools having programs. That is not indicative of how effective they are at all. You have to front end it and backload it. You have to say right up front there is an expectation. If we don't define purposefully the culture on our campuses, our students are going to do it for us.

So as administrators, we have to say right up front this is the culture of our campus and that conduct is not permissible. Then when we implement our programs, we implemented an anonymous program and the surveys went from 80 percent of students who said bullying was a problem on our campus. Within 1 year of having that program, it dropped to under 20 percent. So was that an effective program on our campus? Absolutely. Why? Because we took it seriously, we communicated that to the students, and on the back end of that the consequences for violating that expectation were swift.

So is it effective? Depends on entirely on who is implementing the program.

Ms. AFTAB. I think it depends on who is delivering it. Not just as the expertise, but whether it is kids or adults. We are finding as a peer-driven program those of the Girl Scouts, those that are coming out of the Thin Line campaign at MTV, those that come from our Teen Angels are working, and what you need to do is tell the stories. Although in cyber-bullying I caution not to just look at the suicides, because so many more kids are hurt every day.

If you tell the real stories, if you tell the story of Megan Meier, if you tell the story of Jesse Logan, if you tell the real stories as real kids, you see changes of behavior immediately. We have 500,000 kids who took a pledge against cyber-bullying, 200,000 of them took it in a 48-hour period when it was posted on line.

If you let them know what it means, you can let them know what to do to stop it in themselves, and when to report it and what will happen when they do? You see changes, remarkable changes, but

what we need to do is use their language, and make it meaningful and make it real.

Mr. SCOTT. Can you tell us where we can find the research on this, on effective bullying prevention programs?

Ms. AFTAB. I was part of the NTIA OSTWG report and I was also part of the Berkman Center, and I don't think they are very good academic research on this because kids lie often. So when you ask them questions, when you are doing academic research, you don't often get the answer. I will share the research that we have done from the Teen Angels asking kids—it is not academic, but there are 500 to 1,000 responses to each of their surveys, and I will share that with you on this. But we need to recognize we can't give up, and even if you stop one kid or a few kids and you let them know what they are doing crosses that line, you will stop some of it. That is what we have to do.

Our stop cyber-bullying toolkit comes out in September. It is totally free. It has professional development surveys and everything for LMK, and it is a free download for any schools that want it and the industry helped put it together, a million dollars worth of stuff that hopefully, if I am hit by a truck we will be able to perpetuate the work.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Mr. Guthrie.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you for coming today.

Are your parents with you today?

Ms. NAPOLITANO. My mom is with me.

Mr. GUTHRIE. You have got to be very proud because you have done a very good job. My youngest is a rising seventh grader as well, so the issues that you talked about in my house we try to monitor everything we can do. And as a parent as a rising seventh grader, just advice on how I can monitor my daughter from what you have seen and learned that would be interesting to learn and hear for the rest of the committee as well.

What things do you think—and what point do you think it is getting too much into seventh graders' business I guess?

Ms. NAPOLITANO. I think some of the things that you should do to maybe help watch what your kids are doing on the Internet, or maybe to be like what my mom did, since she has my passwords to Facebook. I know people don't want to give parents their passwords because they want to keep what they have private. But I think it is important for parents to have their children's passwords, because I think they should be monitoring, because if you don't have somebody's passwords, I know, for example, with Facebook you can look at somebody's page and not see really know what is going on. You can maybe see a couple of their pictures, but you really can only see what they are writing and other people are writing about them if they have their passwords and personal information to get on the Web site.

Mr. GUTHRIE. My wife got into Facebook for the purpose of monitoring our children, so she is now an avid Facebooker.

And Dr. McGraw, or anyone really, once parents say this is serious, I know this is what we are trying to do, this is serious. What are the steps just as I asked Ms. Napolitano? What should I do as a parent?

Mr. MCGRAW. I think the most important thing to do is put yourself in the child's position and ask yourself how you would be feeling if your peer group was saying or doing the things that are being heaped upon your child because if you stand in their shoes for a moment and understand at a particularly vulnerable time—I mean, when a child is in middle school or certainly even in upper school, this is the time that they are defining themselves socially. It is when their self-image is coming together their self-esteem is coming together, their body image is coming together. And if that is under attack, then you need to take that seriously as something that is going to require some attention and some intervention.

And the problem is if a cyber-bully in any way is sending those destructive messages, you might get five of those a day. But the child will repeat them cognitively 10,000 times a day. You have got to intervene with that internal dialogue, and the best way to do that is to get the child to kind of do a test, I call it a litmus logic test. Is this true, factually, what they are saying here? Is this true. The answer is no. What is true? Is it in your best interest to be thinking this.

Give them a checklist to go through and say if they are saying that you are a nerd and nobody likes you, is that true. Then let us generate what is true to take place of that. So they understand you are not going to be the only voice in your child's ear, so you need to be the best voice. You need to be the most action-oriented voice and sometimes you have to put those dots really close together. They are saying this about you is it true. No, it is not. What is true. Let us write that down. Let us journal that. Let us talk about that. Let us replace this dialogue with something that is more constructive and rational. And that is the exchange you have to have with your child.

And just because your child rolls their eyes, they say of course you love me, Dad, you have to, and they roll their eyes, that doesn't mean they don't hear it, it doesn't mean they won't replay it a thousand times when you get through talking. You have got the stand up for your child.

Mr. GUTHRIE. I only got 30 seconds. I was discussing with some people the other day where a mom of another student got on somebody else's Facebook and posted—and we have that notorious case of the bullying with the lady setting up the page. Do you see parents bullying children? How common is that? That was mentioned to me.

Mr. MCGRAW. It is tragically not rare. I mean, truly sometimes the kid's parent will step up and say here is what you should say, and pretty soon they are writing on this and it crosses the line. They need that edit button that Chairwoman McCarthy is talking about. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but they need to not become part of the problem.

Ms. AFTAB. We are seeing a lot of parents will intervene when they think their kids are being cyber-bullied, and they will actually reach out to the kids who have done something that offended their kids directly and start taking them on and identify themselves. But I think that it is so important that we are empathetic and understand what to do, but there are some easier things to do that are sort of point blank.

A, today, right now go home and tell your kids that you promise that you will not overreact if they come to you when things go wrong online. One of the reasons the kids don't tell their parents, and only 95 percent of the kids said they won't tell their parents, is because they are afraid they are going to get into trouble because they weren't supposed to be on Facebook to begin with. So promise you are not going to overreact, promise you are not going to pick up the phone and start screaming to the other kids or their parents or call the FBI.

Then what you need to do is teach them to stop, block and tell. You heard Dave talk about how they put a move in there. Stop. Don't answer back. Block the person, and tell a trusted adult. And that works very well with the younger kids. You might have seen it on the Front Line special.

And last is take five. When something bad happens real life, on-line, put down the mouse or the cell phone and walk away from the device until you are calm. For 5 minutes do something that helps you feel comfortable, feel strong, read a book, go for a walk, play with your puppy, beat up your brother—I know Dr. Phil will not be happy that I said that. But do something that helps you find your center so you avoid doing something you are going to regret like hurting yourself and others. If Megan Meier had disengaged from the computer, that 2½ hours might not have killed her. But she never disengaged because every time you are cyber-bullied, you go back and you reinflct the pain because you see it on line, and after a while you start to believe it so you revisit the scene of the crime.

So we need to get them to start doing it. So tell your kids you are not going to overreact. Teach them to stop, block and tell teach them to take 5 and maybe once in a while teach them to use the technology.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. We have been notified that there is probably going to be a vote going off in about 15 minutes so unfortunately, I am going to have to probably enforce the red light now. Ms. Shea-Porter.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Thank you all for being here. It is a huge problem in our culture and it really has reached tragic proportions. I am glad to see the attention that we are paying to it here and also what all of you out there are doing.

Dr. McGraw, I wanted to start with you. I read an article recently that this generation has less empathy. Now I have got two young adults whom I consider very empathetic and I consider their friends empathetic, but I wonder if that is your experience. Can we teach empathy because we are not just talking about tools and technology, we are talking about the ability of one human being to understand and feel for another. And are parents falling down in that department?

Mr. MCGRAW. I do think there is a problem, and I am not sure that it can be as simply expressed as a lack of empathy because research tells us that it is very difficult to teach and develop empathy if it isn't there at the developmental stages that it should be. But I am not sure that is exactly what we are dealing with. I think what we are dealing with is we are not living in the fast lane. We are living in the laser lane. And our kids are not developing the

relational skills that you are required to develop if you don't have all of this technology.

There was a time when you—we have kids texting their moms from their bedroom, Is dinner ready yet; texting their brother next door, Quit getting my stuff you idiot. Those stuff are happening. Used to be you had to go look someone in the eye and that required you to develop the interpersonal skills that simply are not required when you are texting or typing. And I think that is what is happening here.

And it is so easy to write something and not look the person in the eye and see the pain that they are experiencing, the pain that they are feeling. You wouldn't say that if you were looking Suzy in the eye or Billy in the eye and you saw that this hurt them, that their shoulders dropped their head dropped. You get information from interpersonal exchange that you don't get from the one dimensional aspect of cyber communication. And that is a problem. That is why we see kids going away further in relationships because they are being bombarded with so much stuff on the Internet.

When we grew up, there were three TV channels you were watching, I Love Lucy or Gunsmoke, and we are still waiting for Matt to kiss Kitty. And they just never showed that. But now we are getting bombarded with all of this sexual content. It is racing kids along to a much further level then they are really mature enough to handle.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I didn't know TV was on except for Sunday night, and we were carefully controlled. It was a good thing. I thought it ended 7 o'clock Sunday night. It was over.

Mr. MCGRAW. Those of us on during the week and during the day, let us not go too far. Let us be reasonable here.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Let me ask Ms. Aftab a question.

I see a lot of industries are being drawn into this, how about the cultural heroes of this generation? Are they too engaging in this because kids will listen to somebody who sings to them or impresses them on a film faster sometimes then they will listen to parents?

Is that part of who you are drawing into this dialogue now?

Ms. AFTAB. It is. It is a challenge. I will tell you that. Because often when we tell kids not to send sexts and we choose somebody who can be a role model the next day, we find out that they are sending sexts. But that is one of the reasons when we turn to MTV. We welcomed that. We got Girl Scouts on one end and MTV on the other. And there are a lot of things that MTV can bring to the table and others can't. They can make it cool when other things happen. When they ask a question, they will find out that the kids who indicated they were involved in sexting were three to four times more likely to indicate that they considered suicide. That you will only get on MTV.

So we are looking at it, but it is hard to find anybody other than Spiderman who won't take off their clothes in front of the camera. But we also need to recognize that was part of the real world and that was the excitement that we had. We also have Nickelodeon, that is going to be stepping out and doing a lot more. You are going to be seeing it on television shows and online. Disney is doing a lot more online and on the television shows.

So you find a range of heroes and influencers to the kids and touch them. Seventeen Magazine starting a year-long campaign on this one starting in August on Letters to Phoebe. So we have to find all of the kids you need to reach and all of the different places they go for information from Dr. Phil to Girl Scouts.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I thank you all.

And I just have one last question Ms. Napolitano.

How did you get, or how did the school come together to stand up to it? What is different about your school versus some others? Do you have a different atmosphere in school from the time you have gone there? Has there been an effort on the part of the administration to keep you all close?

Ms. NAPOLITANO. I feel like school does a very good job and really working and just not even cyber-bullying, just problems in general. My school, if anyone has an issue, we have a very good, we have a campus ministry program. And we even let in freshman year know in the beginning of the orientation, or even transfer students are known inside the handbook, if anybody was having a problem, whether it be over the Internet or within school, to just come to ministry, one of the campus ministers or principal or anybody who is in charge to talk about any of the issues that they are facing.

So I think that my school is very comforting and allows them—I think I feel very safe, if I ever had a problem, to go to an administrator.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you.

Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, and ranking member. Thanks to the panel for very, very important topic that we are addressing today. And the work that you have done, your leadership in terms of raising awareness and prevention and survival. I think my colleague, Mr. Guthrie, kind of stimulated some discussion, actually one of the questions I had. Dr. Phil, you talked about being that best voice in your children's lives and the different very practical because, you know, obviously this is something we would love to prevent, but reality is we minimize so we need to make sure that we are doing what we can to help our kids survive this in a very healthy way, emotionally and physically.

Ms. Napolitano, thank you for being here representing the Girl Scouts and representing what your school has done on this issue.

You mentioned a Web site to particularly educate parents about the ever-changing technological world. In your experience, do many girls share that Web site with their parents?

Ms. NAPOLITANO. The LMK Web site? I would say that a lot of people, I think when they see anybody who does obviously view the LMK Web site I think they would tell their parents because I think it is through our mission statement it is not only a Web site for teenagers, although it does obviously base around teenagers, but it also says parents should look at the Web site as well to learn more information about cyber-bullying, not even cyber-bullying, also other issues such as sexting and many different issues involved on

the Internet. So it is not only to educate youth but also to educate parents as well.

Mr. THOMPSON. It seems like it would really help them with raising awareness and information. Do you see it take that next step? Does it stimulate the conversation do you find that between the girls and their parents?

Ms. NAPOLITANO. I think it does because I think now not only are teens getting involved on like learning about Internet more about safety, but I think now that parents know more information, I think they feel safer letting their children get a Facebook or a MySpace. I mean, even before LMK, I wasn't allowed to have a Facebook because my mom said that is not a very good Web site. She didn't want to let me on it because she didn't know much about it.

But I think when parents learn more about the Internet, I think they will feel more safe allowing their children to enter a Web site as long as they know what is going on and what they are writing.

Mr. THOMPSON. Dr. Srabstein, cyber-bullying is a relatively new occurrence. It has been relative as long as this technology has provided, I guess, a new tool for bullies to go from virtual—from there into the virtual world. Is the current research on this issue definitive enough to help us understand the problem?

Dr. SRABSTEIN. It is limited. If one does a search under the National Library of Medicine, one can find not more than 25 papers at all of which perhaps three or four, five at the most, may be linked to health issues.

So we are learning, first of all, the whole issue of bullying at large, although as it existed forever, we are just learning about it. Five years ago, I didn't know how to spell bullying. The kids were parading in front of my eyes and I never asked them about being bullied and we were making diagnoses based on other issues when they could have post traumatic stress disorder and so on.

So with that framework, within that context, it is an evolving issue. And cyber-bullying is the newest form of this new "issue" of bullying.

Basically what we are dealing with is 45 years after United States and Congress learned that there was something called child abuse, that was in 1964, we are reexperiencing the same thing again right now with the understanding that the whole issue of bullying and mistreatment is a serious issue. And without that, the whole issue of cyber-bullying is, in itself, different but it is even newer.

So I can't answer your question, Congressman. It is very new. And with all humility, I know more about bullying right now but cyber-bullying I am just learning. And in my clinical experience, I don't find many patients that are being cyber-bullied. That doesn't mean that it doesn't exist there. It means that I may not have been asking about cyber-bullying and/or if I asked them, they may not have said that, in fact, that was the case because they were afraid.

Mr. THOMPSON. And looks like my time has expired. Thank you.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you, Mr. Thompson.

Ms. Clarke.

Ms. CLARKE. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, Ranking Member. It is a very, very important hearing, and I am glad to see that all of you have come and shared with us.

One of the things that have concerned me for some time is that despite the fact that we acknowledge the diversity of the types of households, parents, guardians, that exist in our civil society, we still sort of have a monolithic view to this term “parent.” And I am concerned about how that is translated into the various tools we use to combat bullying.

What is the role of religious institutions, social, and public institutions and other vehicles in our civil society to address this technological facet of our lives? Would you share that with us because, again, I come from a two-parent household, but a lot of my peers didn’t. And so when I say “parent,” I am thinking my mother and father. And I have colleagues and friends, my contemporaries, who are were in foster care.

Can we talk a little bit about that?

Ms. AFTAB. Absolutely. One of the issues you need to recognize is our kids have a lot of influencers. We talked about people they may look to in the media, but it may be their older brother or sister, a neighbor, baby sitters. It can be a teacher at school, it could be faith-based organizations or somebody in Girl Scouts. It could be your coach. It might be somebody who is even younger than you are. Whoever can influence our kids need to be involved here because they need to be a safe place for our kids to land. They need to know what to do. They need to know how to do it. They need to know that you don’t call lawyers. You give them a hug first and let them know they are okay. And we have to deliver it in a on lot of different ways. There are a lot of parents who aren’t on Facebook. There are a lot of parents who will walk into a Build-a-Bear store in the mall and who may not see it on line.

It could be parents who have that old VHS that none of us knew how to use but thankfully the technology got us past that. So we need to take these sessions and put them on tape and allow the libraries and the schools to give them out to their parents. Maybe you are a secretary somewhere and some one will print out a one pager and hand it to you.

We need to figure out the right language, the right way to reach them and what it is we want them to do when they get it. Some basic real quick simple sort of three things. I call them cyber-bully bytes.

Someone in Billings, Montana, sent me an e-mail this morning at sports events, school because all the parents go to that; they don’t come to Internet safety presentations—they are giving out these little cards and it says do you know, and on the other side they are going to put some facts and let parents know where to go for help and all the caretakers. But you are exactly right. And I think we are failing people.

So when they watch Dr. Phil, they are going to learn a lot more than a session at school the parents don’t come to. Maybe a sense of being home with the students and you teach the kids to teach the parents and that way we can engage everyone because without it, our kids are really at risk.

Dr. SRABSTEIN. As a matter of fact, in Maryland, we have created an informal Coalition For the Prevention of Bullying with different sectors of the community. And we recognize that we want going to bring into this coalition representatives of different religious organizations.

I think in our so society, there is a tremendous role that from the pulpit, religious leaders, rabbis, minister, priests and so on, can educate us. That with the use of words, we can kill, and so now our tradition we should not kill, but we can kill in a way that we can hurt definitely and we can kill with a use of words and that can not be legislated all of the issues of free speech and so on. And we don't have drivers licenses or license of how we conduct exchange of words.

Ms. CLARKE. Does anyone else want to chime in on?

I just wanted to share that I think we also need to look at work places. Most people who have access to technology are accessing it because they have to use it for their work. And I don't know whether we have got employers involved in this issue, but I just wanted to share that as perhaps another avenue.

Ms. AFTAB. IBM sent Internet safety a tour of their teens life out to all of their employees worldwide. Toys-R-Us came to us to look at things, and the first thing they wanted to do was educate their employees. We are seeing that Proctor and Gamble is doing the same. So if we can reach the large corporations and even the small ones. And someone mentioned to me the other day that if you are employing teens, you need to know about this because the kids you are employing are at risk. But that is an absolutely great way to do it and it is cheap because somebody has a photocopier.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you. And I thank you again each and every one of you for your testimony and for your time being here.

As I was listening to the testimony you know right now we are getting the attention from the media and I appreciate that and we are looking at where schools are getting involved and the health care are getting involved.

But this is why I also believe why we need Federal legislation. Mainly because I am afraid where are we going to be a year from now when Dr. Phil, your producer is going to say to you okay, enough, get on to another subject. I have plenty of subjects, by the way, you can talk about.

So this is why I believe on the Federal level we need to put something in place with the educational system because Dominique is going to graduate from high school and we are going to have a whole new group of children coming up. Technology is going to change more rapidly than we can ever do legislation.

So I think it is important that we do it right. I think that each and every one of you have done a tremendous job on working on this and being there for our young people. But it is up to us to make sure our schools do stay safe. I hope that we can come up—one of my colleagues, Linda Sanchez from California, had some great legislation on this issue. I plan on working with her on being able to bring it into the education bill.

So with that being said. And I also want to say to take a time out and having a hearing like this, I know a lot of people don't real-

ly pay attention to it. And that is a shame, but I think it is important for Members because believe it or not, if they are not here, and they are in their office a lot of time, they do listen to hearings that go on.

But I think that one thing that I want to add is the valuable role that the media can play. In the case of Dr. Phil with his work raising awareness on keyboard bulliness, which I think is a great sound bite, by the way, he has shown us the valuable role he has already played in these efforts which have been tremendous, and I hope that other media figures do come through.

I also want to mention Mr. Finnegan, the organization, your business, that is also reaching out because you are reaching out to the younger people because hopefully we can catch them before they go into the teen years and become maybe a little more obsessed about what they are doing.

So with that, as you heard the bells going off, we have 11 minutes to get downstairs to vote. So with that from the hearings and the guide that you have given us, we move forward with reauthorizing ESEA, and I appreciate you all being here, and as previously—oh, absolutely.

Mr. PLATTS. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to make a real brief statement in closing.

Again, a sincere thanks to each of you and by your testimony here today, and especially by your advocacy every day in your respective roles, we have mentioned a fair number of children who have lost their lives because of bullying and cyber-bullying. Your efforts is a way that they are being honored and remembered, and for them and their families that the tragic loss of their lives will not be in vain. Because of your efforts that loss of life will help us do better and protect the lives of others going forward. And so I truly commend each of you for what you are doing, and Madam Chair, for you in holding this hearing to do just the same. And this really is about life and death issues. And each of you are playing a key role in honoring those who lost their lives and making sure that we prevent every loss of life going forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman MCCARTHY. Thank you, Mr. Platts. As previously ordered, members will have 14 days to split additional materials for the record hearing. Any member who wishes to submit follow-up questions in writing to the witnesses should coordinate with the majority staff within the requested time.

Without objection, this hearing is now adjourned. Thank you again.

[The statement of Nancy Willard follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Nancy Willard, M.S., J.D., Director,
Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use**

This statement has been submitted by researchers, risk prevention professionals, and others who focus on issues of youth risk online. We appreciate the interest of the House Subcommittee Healthy Families and Communities in the issue of cyberbullying. We felt it would be helpful for you to gain insight from academic researchers and risk prevention professionals who are applying what is known about effective risk prevention to these emerging concerns.

Youth risk online issues must be recognized as a continuum of risky or harmful behavior that includes online and off-line interactions. The young people who are at the greatest risk online are those who also are at greater risk off-line.

The overall approach to address youth risk online must be grounded in the development of strategies to enhance both a positive school community as well as a positive online community—a school-based positive behavior support program with a strong focus on helping all students gain effective interpersonal relationships and dispute resolution skills. Fortunately, there are excellent research-based prevention and intervention programs, including bullying prevention programs, that can be expanded upon to address these new risks.

In addition to this foundation, young people must gain insight into the specific risks associated with communication technologies. There are factors related to use of these technologies that are influencing the situations, sometimes in harmful ways. Young people may place material in electronic format, such as nude images, that can then be used against them. Often the perception of invisibility and the lack of tangible feedback can exacerbate the harmful or risky behavior. The technologies can allow for the involvement or witnessing of the harm by many others.

However, there are also “silver linings.” Because “evidence” is in electronic format this can allow adults to more fully understand the situation, support effective investigations, and provide early warnings. Additionally, the use of these technologies to provide information, support, and crisis intervention to “at risk” youth is demonstrating significant potential for success.

Research has consistently demonstrated that the majority of young people are generally making good choices online and effectively responding to the negative situations that do occur. Therefore, risk prevention professionals can rely on social norms risk prevention approaches—which consistently demonstrate effectiveness. Because many times these incidents are occurring outside of adult supervision, a strong focus must be on empowering and encouraging young people to be effective educators and mediators—and to report online concerns to adults.

As will be outlined below, we would encourage federal legislation that will:

- Ensure multidisciplinary coordination at the federal, state, and local level that includes safe schools, educational technology, juvenile justice, Internet crimes, and mental health.
- Provide for effective ongoing assessment of youth risk online behavior, as well as risk and protective factors and relationship to off-line risk behavior.
- Support the implementation of innovative prevention and intervention programs to address youth risk online, as well as those that use online technologies to address youth risk, that have a substantial likelihood of success.
- Address concerns related the authority of school officials to respond to off-campus actions of students that have or could substantially disrupt school or significantly interfere with the safety of students or their ability to fully participate in instruction and school activities.
- Use communication technologies for the provision of risk prevention and intervention services to “at risk” youth.

Research on Youth Risk Online

High quality academic research has provided excellent insight into issues related to youth risk online. Clearly ongoing research is necessary. Four recommended resources for research insight, two of which are extensive literature reviews, are cited at the end of this document.

The principal research findings in the area of cyberbullying include:

- Cyberbullying is a significant concern impacting many young people, but with different degrees of severity. The reported incident rate of cyberbullying ranges greatly, apparently due to differences in research methodology, including how the questions are asked. Some surveys have not distinguished between minor and significant incidents. In the surveys that ask, generally half of the respondents say they were not distressed. Thus, there is a need in future research to focus more on the extent of harm and effectiveness of youth response strategies.

- There is a significant difference between the less distressing online-only incidents and more distressing known-peer incidents. Teaching students how to avoid and effectively respond to online-only or other minor incidents will help make these incidents more easily manageable, less distressing, and stop escalation. The continuing incidents between known peers are causing the highest degree of distress. Addressing these incidents will be more challenging. Further, these incidents will impact schools. They are generally closely intertwined with on-campus bullying and are far more likely to lead to retaliation at school. A significant portion of incidents appear to involve retaliation, both online and at school.

- Both the aggressors and targets who are involved in the more significant altercations appear to present significant psychosocial concerns. They report involvement in offline aggression, which is more likely to occur where they are physically together. They report disrupted care-giver-child relationships. Therefore, schools will

be less able to rely on parents for effective supervision, prevention, and response. However, there is also emerging evidence of involvement in cyberbullying by young people who have not traditionally been perceived as being involved in the bullying situations. These are the much more sophisticated, high social-status, youth whose aggressive, “put-down” behavior is becoming more evident to responsible adults now that they are engaged in these activities online.

- The vast majority of young people are not reporting these incidents to adults. The reasons appear to include: Lack of trust that adults can effectively help them resolve these situations. A developmental expectation that they should be able to resolve their own disputed—and many times they have. Fear of getting into trouble and losing Internet access. It is also important to address the new challenge that school administrators are facing, that of “sexting”—sending nude images and sexually explicit text messages. There have been three reported studies in this area, none of which have been academically reviewed. However, across these three studies, common patterns appear to be emerging.

- A minority of teens are engaging in sexting activity. Involvement appears to increase with age. Boys and girls appear to be participating in this activity at an equivalent rate.

- A significant amount of this activity is related to personal relationships. This includes current relationships and desired relationships.

- Of significant concern is that many teens, over half in one survey, reported that they provided in response to pressure by others to provide these images. There is also other survey data that suggests that abusive partners are using these technologies for manipulation and control.

- An analysis of reported incidents leads to the identification of four basic types of incidents:

- Developmentally normative behavior where there is no intent to cause harm, but a mistake may lead to distribution. Most frequently, these are situations in the context of personal relationships or exchanges between friends.

- Situations that constitute harassment by pressuring someone to provide an image, distributing the image with intent to cause harm, or sending images that are unwelcome.

- Situations where the youth depicted is engaging in dangerous solicitation activity—seeking sexual “hook-ups” or actually engaging in sexual trafficking.

- Situations that involve significantly exploitive behavior, including coercion or the use of grooming tactics to obtain images and engaging in blackmail upon receipt of images. The latter two kinds of situations appear to be the minority.

Additional areas of youth risk online, especially those related to sexual activities and personal relationships are addressed in the two Berkman literature reviews identified below. Additional areas of concern that also must be addressed, about which there is less research, include youth who are engaging in online communities that support or encourage self-harm including self-cutting, anorexia, drug use, and other risky behavior, online gangs and hate groups, young people who are engaging in or being trafficked for sex online, and addictive access.

Challenges

There are significant current challenges in responding to these youth risk online situations.

- There is a significant need for professional development of key safe school personnel, including principals, counselors/psychologists, and school resource officers. The education of these professionals is essential to ensure effective outreach to and education of parents as well as youth.

- In the 2010 federal budget, the funds available through the Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools program were cut by 40%. This included elimination of all block grant funding for state and local; safe school personnel. Thus, at the point in time when it is vitally important for safe school personnel to be expanding their activities to address these new challenges, many safe school programs throughout the country are vanishing.

- There is a lack of clarity about when school administrators have the legal authority to respond to off-campus activities of students that are or could impact the school environment or interfere with the safety and educational performance of a student. Further, there is a lack of clarity about search and seizure standards with respect to a review of cell phone records, especially if there is a suspicion that those records may reveal nude images.

Moving Forward

If there is any way within the context of possible additional stimulus funding to the states for use by schools that funds could be directed at preserving the safe

school personnel, this should have high priority. Schools are losing the very professionals they need to mobilize to address these concerns.

The following are recommendations for how the Elementary and Secondary Education Act could be amended to more effectively address the concerns of youth risk online.

- Coordinate youth risk online through interagency cooperation—including Department of Education, Safe Schools and Educational Technology, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention—Juvenile Justice and Internet Crimes, and the Department of Health-Department of Mental Health and Center for Disease Control's Division on Adolescent and School Health. Ensure coordinated interactions with Internet and cell phone industry to address ongoing issues related to site and services technologies and practices that may negatively or positively impact youth safety.

- Require that State Education Agencies and Local Education Agencies establish a comparative multidisciplinary approach, ensuring the involvement of professionals in school administration, school counseling and psychology, educational technology, juvenile justice and school resource officers, Internet crimes, and state and community mental health.

- Implement a Youth Risk Online Behavior survey that can be delivered as a companion to the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior survey. This will allow for the better understanding of risk and protective factors and the interrelationship between off-line and online risk. Given time constraints in administration it is not possible to simply add new questions to the YRB.

- Provide funding to support innovative multidisciplinary programs to address youth risk online concerns—and to make use of communication technologies to address the concerns of “at risk” youth. Follow the provisions already present within Title IV, Section 4115(a)(3), which allows Local Education Agencies to apply to their State Education Agency for a waiver of the requirement to implement programs that are scientifically based. The youth risk online prevention and intervention and addressing youth risk through online services programs should set forth a rationale grounded in effective risk prevention that demonstrates a likelihood of success, with strong evaluation and modification built into the process. There also should be a way to link these programs through electronic communications—so that the entire field can learn from each other and engage in continuous improvement.

- Include statutory language to address the legal concerns—by making it clear that the school programs should address on-campus activities as well as off-campus interactions that are brought to the attention of school officials that have caused, or there are reasons to predict will cause, a significant interference with the rights of students to be secure and receive an education. This standard is in accord with the emerging case law.

RESEARCH RESOURCES

Youth Violence and Electronic Media: Similar Behaviors, Different Venues? *Journal of Adolescent Health*. December 2007 Supplement. <http://www.jahonline.org/content/suppl07>.

Internet Safety Technical Task Force. (2009) *Enhancing Child Safety and Online Technologies: Final Report of the Internet Safety Technical Task Force to the Multi-State Working Group on Social Networking of State Attorneys General of the United States*. Appendix C: Literature Review from the Research Advisory Board. Harvard University, Berkman Center for Internet & Society. <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/sites/cyber.law.harvard.edu/files/ISTTF-Final-Report-APPENDIX-C-TF-Project-Plan.pdf>.

Online Safety and Technology Working Group. (2010) *Youth Safety on a Living Internet* (Collier & Nigam). Education Subcommittee Report (Magid). <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/advisory/onlinesafety/>

Biegler S. & boyd d (2010) *Risky Behaviors and Online Safety: A 2010 Literature Review (DRAFT)* Harvard University, Berkman Center for Internet & Society. <http://www.zephoria.org/files/2010SafetyLitReview.pdf>.

CONCURRENCE

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[Whereupon, at 11:53 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

