



**BEST PRACTICES
CLEARINGHOUSE**

- Lessons from the Field -

Promoting Whole Student Health Through Safe Digital Habits

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM ET
Transcript

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Good afternoon, everyone. Just this morning I read an article in the New York Times about a school district in Florida that banned cell phones and other devices for the entire school day. This full day banned rather than just banning technology during class time has been met with mixed reactions from both students and their families. It's yet another example of the complexity of navigating student use of devices to go online for various reasons during school time. We're so pleased to have you with us today for our webinar, Promoting Whole Student Health Through Safe Digital Habits.

In this webinar, we hope to talk about some of that complexity and provide you with some ideas and strategies that you can use to address the online habits of students in your school. On behalf of the US Department of Education, we're pleased to have you with us today and in fact, we have several hundred people registered for this webinar, so we expect more to be logging in soon. As I talk with you a bit about NCSSE and who we are and what we're doing, I would like to encourage you to respond to this poll. This poll will help us to understand just what you might already be doing in your school or your district to address online harassment or bullying.

This webinar is part of our lessons from the Field Webinar Series and the series highlights effective tools, techniques, and strategies that are employed by everyday school practitioners to address topics that are on the top of educator's minds. You can access the recorded versions of webinars from this series in the webpage that's now being shared in chat. Our subject matter experts are excited to share information, resources, and strategies to help you enhance how you work with students to support their health and welfare while they are engaged in safe digital habits and to work to address cyber bullying and online harassment.

Sharing strategies really helps us all to work better, and we're excited to be able to do that today and we encourage you to visit the Best Practices Clearinghouse at ed.gov to share any additional strategies you might be using in your communities. Please note that this webinar does not necessarily represent the policy reviews of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does it imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education. My name is Cindy Carraway-Wilson and I'm a training specialist for the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments or NCSSE. NCSSE is funded by the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Now, I'd like to see if we can pull up some poll results just to see where we are in the room as far as how folks are working to address online harassment.

So it looks like many people are offering some supports to students who are experiencing online harassment, about 43%. Some folks aren't doing anything, but are very interested in finding new approaches to address online bullying and harassment. And then we have folks scattered around in the other areas here, as you can see, with the next highest, the third-highest one being that folks are in the process of identifying ways to support students who might be experiencing harassment. Thank you so very much for participating in that poll. And now I'd like to speak a little bit more about NCSSE. In order to do that, we're showing you the slide, which has an image of our current homepage on the right and some of our more frequently visited resources here on the left. We also share a variety of resources and upcoming events through our social media, so please do follow us to stay abreast of what's going on in the field.

Please note that this webinar is being recorded and all materials you see today, including the recorded version of the webinar, all the referenced resources and the slides and speaker bios will be available on the event webpage within this website. And in fact, some of those items are already posted. Please note that you can also access the previous lessons from the field webinar series by visiting that webinar series event webpage, which is now being posted in chat.

Moving forward, I quickly just wanted to show you the agenda so that we can jump into the content of today. You can see that we're flowing from our welcome and logistics into context setting and our panel discussion. And please do stick around to the end, which is at 4:30 because for that last 15 minutes, we will be doing some responses to the questions that you post using that Q&A button. I briefly wanted to show you our context-setting speakers. We have three of them today, Dr. Melissa Mercado-Crespo from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Ms. Tyiesha Short from the Office of the Surgeon General and Dr. Jenny Radesky from the Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health. And now it's my great pleasure to welcome Ms. Nicole White, who is a member of our webinar planning team and a program specialist in the Office of Safe Supportive Schools, in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the Department of Ed. Nicole?

Nicole White:

Thanks, Cindy. On behalf of the US Department of Education, I'm pleased to welcome you to our latest lessons from the Field Webinar, Promoting Whole Student Health Through Safe Digital Habits. Students are spending more time

engaged in various activities online often without close adult supervision. The US Surgeon General issued an advisory highlighting growing concerns about the effects of social media on youth mental health based on this latest research. For example, according to the Anti-Defamation League, 51% of US teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 have experienced some form of online harassment in the past year, and 46% of those young people reported the online bullying and harassment led to offline or in-person harassment. So in today's webinar, we're going to explore both the positive and negative impacts of social media and other online activities on student health and wellbeing. We have joining us today speakers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Office of the US Surgeon General and the Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health to provide information that will increase our understanding of the issue and offer some suggestions for increasing safe digital habits.

We will begin with a presentation discussing data and trends so that we have a clear picture of the issue. Next, we will hear more about the positive benefits and negative impacts of media usage and gain a better understanding of the gaps in knowledge that require more research. Lastly, we will learn about a strengths-based child-centered framework for helping students, parents, educators, and other adults navigate social media. All presenters will offer strategies to use with students. Following a quick Q&A with the context-setting speakers, we will dig into the topic further with a conversation with two practitioners who are working with or within schools to build safer digital habits with students. Our panel discussion will offer ideas on policies and practices, resources and examples of how to implement digital education and support in your schools. We know you will hear valuable information today and strategies that you'll be able to use in your schools and districts. Thank you again for joining us today. I will turn it back to Cindy to introduce our first context-setting speaker.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Thank you so much, Nicole, for your opening remarks and for your ongoing support of the series. We greatly appreciate it. Now it's my pleasure to welcome Dr. Melissa Mercado-Crespo to our webinar space. She's going to go ahead and provide our first presentation. Melissa?

Melissa Mercado: Thank you, Cindy, and thank you all for the opportunity to share with you today an overview of what we know about cyber bullying and online harassment among youth. My name is Melissa Mercado. I serve as lead behavioral scientist at the Division of Violence Prevention at CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Now, bullying, cyber bullying and online harassment are forms of violence and can be adverse childhood experiences. So as I mentioned, bullying, cyber-bullying, online harassment, they are forms of violence. They can be adverse childhood experiences or ACEs, maybe you know that term.

And here on the screen what we have is the federal uniform definition of children's bullying. It was developed via collaboration between CDC, HRSA and the Department of Education, but it also involved other federal agencies, as well as researchers, practitioners, and school officials. Let's read it. It says, "Bullying

is any unwanted aggressive behavior or behaviors by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth, including physical, psychological, social, and educational harm." Now, there are different types of bullying. Bullying can be physical, such as hidden kicking, tripping. It can be verbal like name-calling or teasing. It can also be relational or social, for example, by spreading rumors or leaving someone out of a group on purpose. And it can also include damage to property. Now, when bullying occurs through via electronics, that's what we call cyber bullying.

In the United States analysis of the 2021 YRBS or Youth Risk Behavior Survey estimate that 15% of US high school students were bullied on school property and 16% were cyber bullied during the past 12 months. Now, there's some subgroups that are at increased risk for bullying victimization, for example, sexual minority youth, overweight and obese youth and youth with disabilities. Now, let's focus on cyber bullying and online spaces. Fact, what happens online doesn't always stay online. Virtual interactions are part of the real world. Violence that is experienced online is real and can have real impact on individuals mental, emotional, and even physical wellbeing. Furthermore, those online environments can also help facilitate violence that happens offline.

So what are virtual communities? These are internet-based environments that offer opportunities for individuals who may or may not know each other to and who may not even be physically close in location to interact with one another. And there are many ways that virtual communities can be accessed. For example, using smartphones, computers, gaming consoles, handheld devices, wearable devices, in short, through any device that allows for internet access and visiting websites or apps. There is a wide variety of virtual communities, most of which could be categorized into five types, and I say could be because I'm sure more types of virtual communities are being developed as we speak. Perhaps the best known one is social media. Here is where we have Facebook, TikTok, X, or the former Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, and so much more. There are also virtual worlds. This is where you create an avatar to experience life in a virtual world and where you may even hold work meetings or even own real estate. It makes great use of virtual reality and augmented reality. And an example of this is Roblox, also Second Life.

We also have live-streaming like YouTube, Twitch, Discord and discussion forums like Reddit, Hive, Quora, and 9GAG. This is where you post a comment, a question, an idea, and are able to have a written conversation with others about it. And last but not least, video games. Yes, video games can be a type of virtual environment because it allows for internet-based interactions with other players anywhere. And in fact, there's estimates that over 215 million people play video games in the United States, 85% of whom play with others. And now we have eSports, right? The universities are recruiting students to become video game players for eSport teams. The US Army has an eSports team and there are professional leagues as well.

Like offline interactions, online interactions cannot be both pro-social, like increasing connectedness, learning and antisocial, increasing aggression and harassment. And we know that parents play a key role in bullying and cyber bullying prevention because beyond their care, they can provide family environments that support healthy development, they can help strengthen youth skills and can contribute to creating protective community environments and positive relationships with parents, other caregivers and caring adults like teachers and school staff can protect youth from involvement in crime and violence. Therefore, it is imperative that we understand and address parents' concerns and needs regarding bullying so they can be best prepared to engage in its prevention.

In a recently published study, we analyzed data from the 2017, 2018 and 2019 full consumer styles online panel surveys, and we found that most parents correctly identify that bullying is harmful, that it is repetitive, and that it involves a power imbalance. However, this study also found that being male, non-Hispanic, Black or Hispanic, having a high school or less education and a small household size were associated with low overall understanding about bullying, including cyber bullying. This has certainly implications for health education efforts to better equip all parents and caregivers about bullying prevention. And another recently published study, this one was based on 2020 full consumer styles online panel survey data, we found that parents and caregivers report greater concern about their children being bullied, that means victimization the blue bars that you see on the screen, rather than bullying others, perpetration, in red on the graph and witnessing bullying, being the purple bars that you see on the screen.

In that same study, we found that not physically attending school was associated with parents being less or not concerned about their children being bullied. And this is concerning and warrants further insight because it may generally suggest that US parents consider bullying mostly to be a physical school's ground problem and not a public health problem that can happen anywhere, including online. Whether online or offline, violence exposure can have long-lasting negative health consequences across the lifespan. For example, children's bullying victimization has been associated with sexual violence in adulthood. It is also possible for online community interactions to have immediate violent consequences offline, like internet mediated gang violence. We need more research. Additional research is needed to determine mediating factors and the role of social engagement across different online spaces and those online and offline violence outcomes.

Yes, we need more research, but there's also vast research that exists on which strategies and approaches work best for violence prevention. We at CDC have some prevention resources for action that are specific to youth violence, including bullying, sexual violence, suicide, self-harm, and child abuse and neglect. The link is here on the screen and heads up, we're going to publish an updated version of the Prevention Resource for Action for Community and Youth Violence very soon, early in 2024.

Now, the Community Preventive Services Task Force recently also recommended school-based anti-bullying interventions to reduce bullying experiences and improve mental health among students. This recommendation is based on evidence specifically from 69 studies that were included in a systematic review and a meta-analysis that was published in 2021. I encourage you, visit the link on the screen. You're going to find more information there. [Stopbullying.gov](https://stopbullying.gov), this is the place to find most of the bullying prevention resources from the US government. I encourage you to look at it. There are many resources available for schools and other types of audiences. We at CDC, HRSA, different agencies between HHS, Education and DOJ, we're part of its editorial board. Resources are available in English and in Spanish, and the website is also now available in Mandarin and Korean.

And from us from CDC, we actively disseminate information and resources through our CDC's injury and violence webpage, the link which is shown on the screen. Now, before I end, I wanted to do a friendly CDC nudge to all of us because fall season is here, and while my expertise and focus is on injury prevention, I work at CDC and I will be remiss not to mention the imminent respiratory virus season. And we have tools available to us. We're in the strongest position yet to fight these viruses like COVID-19, flu and RSV. We have safe and updated vaccines, widely available and effective treatments and rapid antigen tests for testing. You can learn more about all this on the website that is listed on the screen, and I thank you very much for an opportunity to share with you today and for all you're doing in your respective places and communities to prevent online harassment and online violence among our youth. Cindy, back to you.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Melissa, thank you so much for that wonderful presentation. It was great to hear all that information and to be reminded that things that look harmless like video gaming can actually be a place where bullying might be happening. I greatly appreciate all that info and your energy. Now, it's my great pleasure to introduce our next speaker. We bring to you now Ms. Tyiesha Short, who's coming from the U.S. Surgeon General's office, and we'll be providing our next presentation. Tyiesha?

Tyiesha Short: Thank you so much, Cindy. Good afternoon everyone. It is such a pleasure to join you all today. As Cindy mentioned, my name is Tyiesha Short and I serve as an associate director of science and policy in the Office of the Surgeon General. I'm excited to be with you all today to provide an overview of one of our offices' most recent advisories that focuses on the impact of social media, on youth mental health and wellbeing. Now, before I dive in, I want to quickly share more about our office and why we release these written products. The mission of the Office of the Surgeon General is to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our nation. We aim to help everyone understand important public health issues and how we can all work together to take action. We do that through various mechanisms, such as public engagements and events, as well as written products, such as surgeon general advisories, which are public statements that call the American people's attention to an urgent public health issue and provides recommendations for how it should be addressed.

So in May of this year, our office released an advisory on social media and youth mental health, which calls attention to the growing concerns about the effects of social media on youth mental health. It explores and describes both the positive and negative impacts of social media on children and adolescents, primary areas for mental health and wellbeing concerns such as exposure to harmful content online, as well as opportunities for additional research to help understand the full scope and scale of the impact. It also offers actionable recommendations for institutions that can help shape online environments, such as policymakers and technology companies, as well as actions that parents and caregivers, young people and researchers can take.

Before we dive into the findings, I just want to share the extent that we know social media use is nearly universal with up to 95% of young people ages 13 to 17 stating that they use social media sites. And so now I'll dive into some of the positive and negative impacts of social media on youth. So the influence of social media on youth mental health is shaped by many complex factors, including but not limited to, the amount of time children spend on platforms, the type of content they consume or are otherwise exposed to, as well as the activities and interactions social media affords them. Another factor includes the degree to which it disrupts activities that are essential for health, like sleep and physical activities. It is also important to note that different children and adolescents are affected by social media in different ways based on their individual strengths and vulnerabilities, as well as based on their cultural and historical and social economic factors.

Another important factor to consider when assessing the risk of harm is brain development. We know that adolescence is a period when risk-taking factors reach their peak, when wellbeing experiences the greatest fluctuation, and when mental health challenges such as depression typically emerge. And in early adolescence when identities and sense of self-worth are forming, brain development is especially susceptible to social pressures, peer opinions, and peer comparison. Research also finds that frequent social media use may be associated with distinct changes in the developing brain and could increase sensitivity to social rewards and punishments that oftentimes social media can provide young people. And while the focus of this webinar is on online harassment and its impact on youth, I want to also highlight that social media can provide many benefits for some young people, such as by serving as a source of connection and information and support with others who share identities, abilities, and interests. According to a survey, a majority of adolescents report that social media helps them feel more accepted, helps them feel like they can receive support through their tough times. And also like they have a place to show their creative side and stay connected to what's going on in their friends' lives. We also know that the buffering effects against stress, that social support from peers may provide can be especially important for youth who are often marginalized, including racial, ethnic, and sexual and gender minorities. For example, seven out of 10 adolescent girls of color report encountering positive and identity affirming content related to race across social media platforms at least monthly. In addition, research suggests that social media based and other digitally based mental health interventions may

also be helpful for some children and adolescents by promoting help seeking behaviors and serving as a gateway to initiating mental health care.

So although there is evidence that social media can provide benefits for some youth, increasingly we're seeing evidence that indicates there is also reason to be concerned about the risk of harm that social media youth poses to children and adolescents. So social media has been linked to concerning mental health outcomes. For example, adolescents who spend more than three hours per day on social media, they face double the risk of experiencing poor mental health outcomes such as symptoms of depression and anxiety. And we know that this is concerning because according to a 2021 survey of teenagers, they spend on average three and a half hours a day on social media with one in four spending five or more hours and one in seven spending seven or more hours per day on these platforms.

Studies also have shown that greater social media use may predict poor sleep, online harassment, poor body image, low self-esteem, and higher depressive symptom scores, particularly among young girls. We also know that parents are worried about potential harms. In a survey, a majority of parents of adolescents said they are somewhat, very or extremely worried that their child's use of social media could lead to problems with anxiety or depression or self-esteem and being harassed or bullied by others.

Then we were interested in understanding what drives concerns related to social media use and youth mental health and wellbeing. So scientific evidence suggests that harmful content exposure as well as excessive or problematic social media use are some of the primary areas for concern. When it comes to excessive and problematic social media use for children, we know that oftentimes social media platforms are designed to maximize the user engagement through tools like push notifications, autoplay and quantifying, and displaying popularity through things like likes.

And studies have also shown that a relationship between social media, youth and poor sleep quality, reduced sleep duration, sleep difficulties, and depression among youth. For example, nearly one in three adolescents report using screens more commonly social media until midnight or later on a typical weekday. We know this is important because poor sleep has been linked to alter neurological development in adolescent brains, depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Social media use can also expose children to content that presents risk of harm. About two thirds of adolescents are often or sometimes exposed to hate based content according to a recent survey.

In addition, as Dr. Mercado just stated, bullying on social media is also an issue that young people encounter, and it's also linked to depression. And as she stated earlier, certain subgroups such as sexual and gender minority youth are more likely to report experiencing cyber bullying. We also know that adolescent girls and transgender youth specifically are disproportionately impacted by online harassment and abuse, which is associated with negative emotional impacts. And in the survey, nearly six in 10 adolescent girls said they've been

contacted by a stranger on certain social media platforms in ways that make them feel uncomfortable.

Now, the advisory also covers some of the known evidence gaps that exist. So despite widespread use of social media among children and adolescents, we still do not yet have enough evidence to determine if social media is sufficiently safe for them. We know that there are critical gaps in our understanding of mental health risks to youth posed by social media. So the advisory offers research questions to help fill some of those knowledge gaps, including but not limited to the following list, including what type of content and what frequency and intensity generates most harm for which users and why, as well as what are the potential pathways through which social media may cause harm or benefit to children and adolescent mental health and wellbeing.

Overwhelmingly, what we've heard is that there is broad concern that there is a lack of access to data and lack of transparency, which has been huge barriers to understanding the full scope and scale of the impact of social media on young people's experiences on these platforms. And while more research is needed, we know that there are actions that can be taken now to help protect and support young people and create those healthier and safer online environments for them.

So the advisory outlines a multifaceted effort to maximize the benefits and reduce the risk of harm posed by social media with actions taken by groups across the spectrum, including policymakers, technology companies, researchers, families and children and adolescents themselves. And through our travels across the country, we've heard and understand that schools are also grappling with this issue and they have been for quite some time. So I'd like to offer just a few considerations and actionable steps that can be taken specifically for those of you who are working in schools and looking for ways to better support young people in your lives.

So we know that strategies and approaches for protecting children and adolescents from potential negative impacts of online environments such as harassment, and at the same time supporting access to obtaining the potential benefits is complex and multi-dimensional. Some opportunities for schools and educators include teaching kids about responsible online behavior and modeling that behavior, supporting the implementation and evaluation of digital literacy curricula and reporting problematic content and activity that you see young people experiencing. Oftentimes we know that you're not always privy to that, but when you are being able to report that problematic content.

There are also a number of programs and evidence-based practices that can be implemented by schools to promote mental health and digital wellbeing. Research shows that educational programs that promote safety as well as digital citizenship and digital literacy that work in collaboration with the educational system are all effective in promoting mental health and digital wellbeing. These programs work to highlight the benefits of social media and other online environments for youth and reduce the potential harmful pathways that some

youth may experience as it relates to its youth. And with that, I'd like to thank you for your time and attention and all the work you do to support our nation's young people. I'll turn it back over to you, Cindy.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so much for that presentation. I greatly appreciate it. Again, the energy with which you present, it really shows the passion and the importance of this topic. Now it's my pleasure to introduce Dr. Jenny Radesky, who will be giving us a presentation from her work, both at the University of Michigan Medical School and also from the Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health. Dr. Radesky.

Jenny Radesky: Thank you, Cindy. Hi everyone. It's so nice to be able to speak to teachers, administrators, counselors, nurses, all of you. I just so appreciate the work you're doing. I'm a developmental behavioral pediatrician, which means I often collaborate with schools to support kids who are differently abled. I follow kids with autism, ADHD, learning, disabilities, trauma, and I know that those are often the kids who are unsafe in school environments. One of my approaches clinically is always to look for the underlying factors or lagging skills or social emotional challenges that kids are having and addressing those to support them in being safer and making more positive problem solving choices in the school environment.

In my research on media and kids, I also like to understand how is the media environment mismatching with the way kids experience the world, with the way kids understand things and their needs, such as sleep or time chatting with their parents. So I'm excited today to talk a little bit about the work we're doing at the Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health that I hope can give you some action oriented steps for how to intervene. We've just heard two talks about the nature of the problem and some potential solutions and really great resources. This talk is going to be a little bit focused on some practical strategies and a new framework for how to intervene on such a tricky topic. Let me see if I can control the slides. There we go.

Our Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health is run through the American Academy of Pediatrics. We received a \$10 million five-year grant from SAMHSA to establish this center to serve as a centralized, trusted source of evidence and support for children and teens, parents, educators, pediatricians, and other professionals who can help youth navigate social media. And we define social media pretty broadly, as Melissa had discussed that this is really any platform that allows virtual communities as well as user generated content to be distributed to users. So not just TikTok Instagram, but also Roblox, Discord, YouTube, things that kids are using from a very early age.

And our approach to this has largely been to try to address the fact that we know this is such a hot button topic for kids and for teachers and for families. To be honest, it makes families feel really stressed and guilty. Every time I talk to a journalist even, they're like, "Oh, I'm so bad at this. We have too much screen time in my household." Or I'm talking to families in clinic and they'll say, "Yeah.

"I'm so bad at this." And that sense of guilt and shame about this topic is actually part of one of the obstacles to us making some progress with families. That's one thing we're doing at the center, is to call this out and recognize the source of some of that shame and guilt that we as kids or parents are feeling about our relationships with media.

Media has such opportunities to be this source of cool ideas and creative entertainment, but one of the reasons we feel such a conflicted relationship with it is as Tyiesha was talking about some of the design features of technology make it hard to have the balanced positive relationship with media that we want. Another big source of some of this shame and guilt comes from the cultural messaging that we have about technology. It's often very polarized. Here's just an example of some news headlines that I found a couple of months ago. I just Googled kids in screen time or teens in social media, and you get some really divergent and polarized all or nothing messages in the news media about kids in social media.

You hear this is totally fine, it's not a problem. Or you hear this is the worst things ever and all kids are going to get kidnapped and locked in a shed in North Carolina. There's really not a lot of nuance being communicated about the complicated relationship that kids and their parents have with social media. And why is that nuanced message not getting out? It's because of the digital ecosystem itself. What trends, what gets more clicks things that are really extreme, really loud and bold, things that don't have a lot of nuance, but things that arouse a lot of emotion.

So one thing we're just trying to call out, if you're a parent or a teacher listening to this is like, it's okay to recognize this topic makes me feel terrible, and there's you know what? I'm just going to let that go. I'm going to call it out and let it go because I need to do that in order to move past and just be action oriented about it and meet kids where they are. I do this, if a child has a tantrum in front of me in clinic, we got to say, "Oh, let's use this as information. Let's figure out what this child's struggling with and let's move on from there."

So this is our framework from the center of excellence. It's really trying to be strength-based and child-centered because we believe that in order to intervene and really support families in this really tricky challenging topic, we need to be strength-based. We can't come in saying, "Take it all away. You're all doing a terrible job." We really need to center, what are these kids going through? How do we help them have agency and self-regulation over their own media use? How do we start young, understand their individual differences, consider what's the family and community that they live in, and really shine a light on the digital ecosystem itself and how it is contributing to problems as well as solutions. S.

O I'll go through each of these aspects of the framework just to illustrate a few ways that it may apply to safety in schools and then talk about a few potential solutions. This is not meant to be exhaustive, but it's really meant to generate

new ways of thinking to innovate and meet kids where they are and hopefully have more fruitful conversations with the kids in your buildings about media.

So framework item one, centering on kids and who are they and what do they need? We're really trying to help youth and caregivers provide support for agency, that kids don't feel controlled by technology. They feel like they're in control. They're making decisions that are healthy for them. That includes skills in digital citizenship. I'm not going to post this nasty thing about someone else. I know how to recognize when something is misinformation.

Media self-regulation, which is like, you know what? I'm deciding to turn it off right now. This doesn't feel good anymore. And letting teens and kids contribute to solutions in the home. We're really working with families to say, "How do you have conversations with your teen who's up on their phone all night? How do you approach this without them feeling like you're just going to take that phone away, but you're actually letting them contribute and say, how would you change this? What experiment do you want to run in our home to see if we can improve your sleep?" We want to treat kids like subjects who can participate in this rather than objects that we control.

So some implications for school safety. We really want to help kids build these skills where they're exerting agency and deciding, "I'm turning the screen off to go to bed. I'm going to resist checking notifications during class." I know that sounds easier said than done, and we definitely need the tech companies to be helping us with some of this. But at the same time, teaching kids to enjoy creative pro-social or community supportive uses of social media teaching them here's the good stuff. This is the stuff that really supports your learning needs and your community needs. This other stuff, it's fun. It may be entertaining, but it's really not the stuff that's meeting all of your values and needs.

So a couple of examples of what you might be able to do in your classrooms to help kids exert their own control over technology. One, I know this is a big topic. I'm not an expert on cell phone policies in schools, but when we just interviewed kids for a recent common sense media report that and I'm happy to share links too, they told us it's hard when cell phone policies in schools are inconsistent, varying from one day to the other or one class to another. They would like some support in saying maybe putting their phone in a bag or silencing notifications or doing things that help them resist that impulse to check. There are some apps that do this like pocket points or forests or there's probably others, but really they give you little rewards to, if you haven't checked your phone during school, I heard about pocket points from my old babysitter who used it.

And even if you change technology in the classroom, you can see how is it distracting me? How is it affecting my attention and emotions? I heard about this great example of a teacher who had all their kids put on all of their notifications and see how it felt to focus during class that day. That's maybe not something you'd want to do, but I love the idea of experimenting with kids and letting them be some of the experts that learn about how tech makes them feel.

All right. Item two is taking a developmental lens. For those of you who work in early childhood or kindergarten or elementary school, this is where we need to start supporting healthy relationships with technology from the time of infancy. That's what we're doing at the center, is to take a real developmental lens, because early childhood is where healthy mental health starts. It's also where kids start to develop their relationships with technology. They use it all the time to calm down or they use it to fall asleep.

So in schools, you may see this as a kid who's playing a lot of violent video games or age inappropriate content and you're seeing sleep problems, you may be seeing aggression. And we know that if we change that content, their behavior gets better. Or some of my research has looked at how when devices and media are used to calm young children down, it gets in the way of learning self-regulation skills over time. They're not learning on their own, how do I feel? What should I do about this? And that's a really, really important skill for social problem solving.

So I've been talking with teachers, what do we do? Do we send home positive ideas for tech use at home, the cool mobile games that you're using in school? I learned from my kids' teachers about Lightbox and other funny coding apps. What movies might help them talk about mental health or current events with their kids? What play ideas help kids get out that energy and emotions? And I do sometimes see this in my patients, screens are being used in classrooms to keep kids occupied or calm, especially if they've disruptive behavior. So maybe address having policies about that so that kids aren't getting used to it as this way that they channel their negative emotions.

So our third principle is individual differences. Every kid is wired a little differently and their relationships with media is going to vary by those strengths and challenges. Things like kids with poorer sense of self, less impulse control, more perfectionism and social anxiety. They may have very different relationships with social media than a kid who's really secure and confident. They're also profiled by these characteristics through data profiles for marketers. So our approach can't be one size fits all. I know in schools what you see is the kids who have those lagging skills like executive functioning, self-regulation or perspective taking. You're probably seeing them have more disruptive behavior, but they're also more likely to have problematic media use habits. And they're also more likely to be recommended problematic content because they've used a violent video game, they're going to get more ads for more violent video games.

So things you can do is maybe build some data literacy to help kids understand what does the internet know about me? Does it know how old I am that I like rabbits, that I love YouTube videos where they blow things up. Kids want to know about this stuff. And you can also help tailor some of your interventions in a way that helps kids identify who am I and what matters most to me. So just two examples of this that hopefully you can look into through these links is the digital privacy toolkit from a group in the UK that's done a lot of work on kids'

data privacy, or they have all these modules about helping kids understand who has my data? Who's tracking me? Why do I have to worry about this?

And number two is from the Center for Digital Thriving and Common Sense Media, they put together this value card sort, which is for use in classrooms. This is just a little snippet of them where kids get to sort out what matters most to me. What do I value the most? How does tech help that or hurt that? So they are making the decisions of how that might shape their behavior change. Okay.

Number four is the important of context. Child media use does not occur in a vacuum. Access to other community opportunities and parent media use really shape child wellbeing too. So what can we do about this? We know that students who have less. Access to afterschool activities and other opportunities often engage with more social media and video gaming to fill in that time. There's also research that students or kids whose parents use a lot of technology and social media may not feel as close to their parents. They have fewer opportunities to connect with them emotionally at home. So parent tech use might be something we call out too.

I love afterschool programs. I'm not going to tell you how to run those, but the more that they're available through funding, that's one thing you can do structurally. I love this resource, parentandteen.com, if you wanted to send home ideas for how parents and kids can have more productive conversations about things that they're stressed out about. Device-Free Dinner is a very funny video on Common Sense Media with Will Ferrell ignoring his kids by using his mobile device at dinner. But it's just an initiative to help families challenge themselves to have device-free dinners, both for kids and parents. As well as I love this Would You Rather game. Gamify's talking about a really tricky topic. You can find it here where you just say, "Would you rather?" And I did this with my own kids this weekend. It was awesome. I was like, "Would you rather use your smartphone all day or snuggle with the dog all day?" And it was great to have a conversation about why certain activities maybe matter more to kids than others.

All right, finally wrapping up with... One of the biggest issues in our framework is really helping families recognize this is not all on their shoulders. So many digital platforms that kids use were designed by adults for adults. They didn't really think about how kids would use them. They're optimized for engagement and ad revenue, not child wellbeing. This means that extreme content, misinformation, commercialism, unrealistic beauty ideals, that's what might be trending and be recommended to kids and teens. So, child-centered design codes like policy being considered in different states and the federal government are needed. Here's just some examples. You may be struggling with the fact that kids are taking part in dangerous TikTok challenges or they're finding ways to act out and post it on social media because likes and engagement counts are reinforcing that. When you have an anonymous platform, it makes cyber bullying much more likely. When you have a platform that elevates trolling rather than being caring and supportive, those are all design choices that could shape the way kids are interacting online.

So, what you can do from an educational standpoint is the same Common Sense Media curriculum from the Center for Digital Thriving, has helping kids notice design tricks that keep them on longer. And then if you want to learn more about policy initiatives that are trying to create more of a child design code in the US, you can look at the American Federation of Teachers Likes versus Learning Report or this Designed with Kids in Mind Coalition that the American Academy of Pediatrics is part of that's trying to advocate for kids' needs in the digital world. So, I'm going to wrap up, but just by recognizing a lot of what I'm talking about is primary prevention, setting healthy digital habits and routines and helping families have some solutions of how to manage this at home.

What you many times probably see in your schools is a tertiary kid who's come in, they've been bullied, they're really upset, and there's a lot more that we can do to develop through the CDCs resources, but also maybe through our work with Common Sense Education or other American Psychological Association to support you all in creating more approaches for addressing cyber bullying or other negative online experiences when they come to your attention in school. One thing I'd love for you to do is if you have any questions about kids you've seen recently that you just don't know how to handle it, send us a message through our interactive Q&A portal.

Or if you just want some more resources about a specific topic, happy to answer those. We post our answers, or we don't. If you just have a simple question for us via email, we can just email you back. But if you really have a tough, tricky case, we then post it online so other families can learn about it. Don't send us any identifying information. Just send us a brief description of the problem you're facing. So, thank you so much for listening. I'm happy to take some questions with the rest of the panelists.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so much. And I'd like to welcome Melissa back in. Tyiesha had to log off. She's going right into another webinar for another group on this topic. So, we have two of our first speakers. Jenny, this question came in pretty early on and it's one for you. This one is, "How do you wean children off of YouTube Kids?" Do you have any suggestions?

Jenny Radesky: Yeah, and I'll just answer this by talking about some of our framework principles. One is design features. YouTube Kids has features like algorithmic recommendations feeds and autoplay that make it hard for kids to disengage. And they also, in order for content creators to trend and be recommended on YouTube and YouTube Kids, they often put a lot of things in their videos that kids can't resist, like candy or Elsa Princess costumes or other stuff. It's not educational. It's not the good stuff that you could find on YouTube.

So, if you want to stop YouTube Kids altogether, there are alternate platforms like Sensical. Sensical comes from Common Sense Media. It is free. Every single video that's on Sensical has been viewed by a human to make sure it's educational and they don't have all that kind of commercial or influencer content on it. So, it's finding an alternate. Another might be to switch to watching together just the sort of videos that you like the most. Maybe it's

Sesame Street videos from your childhood or cooking videos or something like that. That takes more work on your end. But those are my two recommendations. There's a lot more oversight on your part versus switching to a different platform altogether.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you. Melissa, this one might be for you, but either of you can respond. There was a question that just wanted a little bit more clarity about, does the research show that teens are more depressed or anxious now than they were before social media really became so popular? Is there any research about that?

Melissa Mercado: We would need to know, maybe Jenny knows more specific about that type of research, but we also need to think about the context of when our kids were living these past couple of years, right?

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely.

Melissa Mercado: There was a lot of changes. COVID-19, the pandemic, affected us all and altered everything. Graduations that didn't happen in person. Birthday parties that couldn't happen. Going to virtual learning, which was great to maintain continuity of learning. And kudos to the teachers. I still don't know how you did it. And the parents too. It was very challenging time for the kids and having this access to internet to connect it to social media, to games, to be able to connect and move more formally the playground to the virtual spaces, because we have that virtual space playground, that changed the context for kids. It can also have affected what Jenny was very greatly talking about, about their aha habits with social media being connected, how long they spend on time. So, I think we need to see if there's specific research. Jenny may know about that. But we also need to consider of all the different factors that were happening globally in our community, in our context, but also individually with the kids because each kid is unique.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. And you actually answered two questions there because we did have a question about COVID, so that was wonderful, about the impacts that COVID had. So, thank you. Jenny, did you want to add to that or you're going to pass?

Jenny Radesky: Yeah, I would just say I totally agree with Melissa. Yes, the trends of worsening mental health in young people has definitely been increasing. And some researchers point to that point of more social media use and more smartphone access as a time where it accelerated. There's lots of academic debates of, "Well, what else was going on in kids' lives during those times in terms of school shootings or other parent mental health issues or other issues with COVID?" And so we can't only focus on social media being the only thing and assume that, "Oh, if we just take that away, the problem will be solved." That's part of our interventional approach is to say, "Social media is so intertwined with the other challenges the child might be going through and their individual strengths and challenges that we need to address all of it." Because just removing social media from a child who's struggling may actually remove the access to a

community of other kids or an affirming community. Now, we need social media to be designed better for sure, so that they have access within a community that's not otherwise negatively influencing them.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. And I have one more question. We have to try to keep the responses super brief. And for the audience, if we don't get to your question, we will be sending those to our speakers. We also send it to the Department of Education so that we can guide future material. This is a good question though. "In substance use prevention, we always advocate for delay." Delay's in quotes with a big exclamation point in this question. "Do we try to delay social media use among young people as long as possible?" Do you have any thoughts or opinions about that? Melissa?

Melissa Mercado: Jenny, I think you were about to speak.

Jenny Radesky: Yes.

Melissa Mercado: I'm sorry.

Jenny Radesky: So, there is research that kids who start social media accounts in the 8, 9, 10, 11 age range have worse outcomes than kids who started at 13 or above. So, I think we do recommend to families, don't let your kids lie about their age to start social media accounts early. Because there's a lot that they see on social media that they're just not at a developmental stage to be fully processing. And they may have more problematic relationships with media. But 13 isn't this magical age where you should start a social media account either. And trying to help, the same way with getting a phone, helping parents realize this isn't just an automatic rite of passage. It's something you really need to be intentional about, talk about, a lot with your kids. How's their experience? What do they want to change about it so that it is... And that there's some kids who maybe they want to wait until high school until they have social media accounts because they know it just brings a lot of drama. But let the child be part of that conversation. That's a big, big key.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Melissa, what would you add?

Melissa Mercado: I would add to that, that we need to keep in mind the different types of online communities as well and the online platforms. Because one thing is having your own account on X particular social media platform or Facebook or Twitter or Snapchat. On another thing, it's maybe playing video games with your mom and your dad and your cousin and your grandparent and your uncle and family members, and keeping that connectedness and learning skills. So, the purpose of it. Are we using it to stay connected with others? That connection that Jenny was mentioning that maybe we cut it off and it's not happening, especially in these times, remote, being away from others. So, I think it's very particular. I don't think there's a magic number. But I think the purpose, the context and the content that it's being used for and it's available there can play a big role and decision marker for parents and caregivers.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Right. Yeah. That purpose and content piece is important. And I also was hearing that connection, that sense of connection and can it be healthy connection? And how can that be? How can whole families participate in that, maybe even? Yeah. All right, thank you. We're going to go head back into our webinar presentation. I want to thank Jenny and Melissa. Thank you so much for being here today and for offering these presentations. And now I'd like to welcome in our two panelists who are going to carry on this conversation.

So, I'm welcoming onto the stage now Ms. Tamara Sobel, who is a national advisor on health and media literacy at Media Literacy Now, and Mr. William Wright, who's a school counselor at the Sherwood Acres Elementary School in Dougherty County School System in Georgia. Welcome, both of you. We so appreciate you being here today. Thank you so much for agreeing to talk with us about what you are doing and trying to do to support students in schools.

My first question or prompt for you is about the fact that teachers and administrators are reporting that they don't feel particularly prepared or they don't know enough about the platforms and technology that young people are using in a way that they feel like they need to be able to help young people. So, what can they do if this is how they're feeling coming into the space? Tamara, we're going to start with you.

Tamara Sobel: Okay. Also, hello everybody. I also want to give a little disclaimer. I work for Media Literacy Now, which is a policy organization in a narrow space of talking about policy. And then I also am a consultant on my own. So, I want to make sure people understand some of the views are my own and others will be on behalf of Media Literacy Now.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Thank you for that clarity.

Tamara Sobel: Okay. So, about teachers feeling hesitant or not feeling prepared. We hear that all the time, and it can be intimidating if a teacher or an administrator is not a digital native themselves, but I think getting over the fear is important and understanding that so many of these skills are related to teaching skills that they're already teaching, have civility, digital citizenship, which is the concept of responsibility, safety, empathy. Those concepts are familiar in other contexts. So, also I think people have to realize that they can be learning at the same time, that a lot of these discussions are interactive. They can learn from students. And getting these discussions started is what's really important. And in the classroom, librarians are doing a lot of digital citizenship and digital safety education. School counselors, nurses, all can be part of this discussion. So, really a whole school approach I think is the right way to do it.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you. And Mr. Wright, what would you like to add?

William Wright: I agree with everything that was said. I just want to add, I remember I was once one of those educators who initially refused to want to learn about new technology until I started to get a lot of students coming into the office with issues regarding fights that they videoed on Snapchat. And now we got to figure

out what's going on. So, I encourage all educators to not be resistant to learning the new technology. I encourage schools to bring in people for professional learning opportunities for your staff, to do research to find out what are the top used social media platforms, and to make sure that somebody in the building knows.

We have a team of techie teachers who we use to do trainings in our buildings to make sure that someone in the building can help us understand what's going on in the social media world. So, everybody who's involved in education should try to stay up-to-date with what's going on, and not be afraid. And then I advise them too to go home, create your own, use them how you want to use them, but at least that way you'll be familiar with what all the platforms are able to do.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Now, this is an unscripted question, but I'm curious, and you can opt out, Mr. Wright. So, you said you were one of those people who didn't want to do this. What made you take that first step and what was that first step?

William Wright: Well, the kids were talking about what they were posting on TikTok. That was the platform that they used. And I had no idea how TikTok worked. I stopped with Facebook. I do the basic programs. But because I was not able to actively participate in the conversation that was going on, it made me realize I needed to step up and do what I need to do to be a better practitioner as a school counselor. So, learning the technology is very important. I can even tell you this: outside of technology, kids do something now called shadowboxing. And it's a game that students do. It's almost like they're play fighting. They're just doing different things with their hands. We had an educator write a student up for shadowboxing when they were just playing the game. So, sometimes being out of the loop with what's going on in the kid's world, it could be more harmful than good. So, that's why it's important to just take that extra step and be involved in their world. Yeah.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Yeah. So, you're also bouncing back to the good old-fashioned positive youth development principles of meeting young people where they are, right?

William Wright: Yeah.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: That's great. All right. During our conversations that we had, we had some brief conversations just before the event, you both mentioned that students need spaces and time to be able to talk about their online experiences. So, I'm hoping you can take a moment to describe how you have created space for these conversations and how you facilitate those. And for this one, I'd like to begin with you, Mr. Wright.

William Wright: Great. We are a restorative practices school, so we open our days with restorative circles where our students are able to do check-ins and things like that with staff as well as with specialized people in the building who've been trained to help. What we learned to do is to create probing questions to sometimes get the information that we need, because sometimes students won't be forthcoming with what's going on. In my role as a counselor, of course,

students know that they can share whatever they'd like to share with me in confidence, as long as it's not harm to themselves or harm to others and things like that. But it's just about creating spaces for students to know, "Hey, I can come in here, I can talk about what's going on, and after I disclose what's going on, I'm going to get help."

A lot of times when the help doesn't come or the follow through doesn't take place, or even if the follow through is handled unprofessionally, for example... Because students today believe in the snitches get stitches rule. So, no one wants to be known as a snitch. So, to be able to maintain their confidence and be able to still get them the help that they need, it helps a lot. But we do it through restorative circles, giving students a chance to come to small groups or even one-on-one, focus groups, and talk about the things that they're experiencing in the classroom, online, and it helps foster the communication that we need in our school.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so much for those examples. And Ms. Sobel?

Tamara Sobel: Yeah. Well, most of my work right now is policy work in terms of creating the policies, changing and modernizing policies to support the media literacy, digital wellness, digital citizenship discussions in the classroom and the curriculum. So, I would say the way it looks from my point of view is we want to make sure the policies are changed, which will then support the school districts to do what they need to do in the classroom. And once the policies change, then hopefully that provides support, provides PD, provides resources for the teachers to do this work in the classroom.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so much. And that's a good segue into some questions that we have coming up in just a moment. So, have you found that addressing or monitoring social media with students, have you found it to be an effective way to prevent school violence or other harm that students are experiencing? I know you're not necessarily doing direct in the schools right now, Tamara, but go ahead and let's start with you about maybe some more ideas about some of the practices and policies that schools might do.

Tamara Sobel: Right. Well, in my role as a consultant, which is separate from Media Literacy Now, I actually have looked into this quite a bit and talked about it, and I think it's somewhat controversial, the idea of social media monitoring. There are a lot of districts that are doing it, that's for sure. But there's also some pushback as far as the disproportionate impact on certain groups. It can be a cultural gap or there can be a generational gap to interpreting what may not be a real threat. These gaps can have students hauled in and punished for reasons that really are not legitimate, and then that breeds lack of trust between the administration and the staff and the students. And also, some of the actual surveillance algorithms, the technology that's used for surveillance, can have its own flaws and biases in the technology for surveillance, so that can also lead to disproportionately targeting certain minorities. Those are certainly some of the dangers and the drawbacks that we've seen, so it really is a controversial issue.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Yeah, right. Absolutely. And it does, like you said, it sets up certain populations to be targeted by that surveillance and misinterpreted in much the same way that you, Mr. Wright, had mentioned the shadowboxing issue.

William Wright: Right.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Would you like to add to that conversation?

William Wright: Just a little bit. We've learned, especially after the pandemic, that location of the event, the bullying that's occurring, and the timing that it's occurring is important. Because in some states, bullying is a crime. So, if it's happening at home on a student's personal device, some schools don't get involved in that. They advise parents to call the police in that case, because it didn't happen at the school. Sometimes if it's happening at the school on a school given device, then of course the school may have to intervene and do different things. So, there are a lot of different scenarios that impact the way that we respond to it. But it's important to be monitored. Because most conflicts happen outside of the school and they're brought to school. So, in some way or another, we're going to be impacted. So, being aware of them, trying to be proactive with helping students make good decisions, will always be the best practice for our schools.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Yeah, absolutely. We saw that in the research by the Anti-Defamation League, that it was such a high percentage of students who were harassed or bullied online did report that it became face-to-face and in-person. So, we can't just ignore it, for sure. What other policies, practices, or approaches might a whole school might take or individual people within the school take to help support students maybe who are being harassed or bullied or to prevent harassment? Mr. Wright, I'd like to start with you on this one.

William Wright: Well, we received an innovative grant and we initiated a program called Flash because we wanted to encourage our students to, "If you see something, say something. Wrong or right, keep it in the light. You may get in trouble for it, but hey, it's worth it in the end." So our FLASH program is an acronym for Family, Life, Awareness, Safety and Health. And it's a series of workshops that we do monthly. We bring in parents. We bring in students. We bring in teachers. And we talk about issues related to things that are going on online, happening in our communities, just to foster those conversations about what's happening and what everybody needs to know in order to help keep people safe in schools regarding bullying, online bullying, and things that are impacting our students' lives daily. So it's important that we establish those types of practices to keep all stakeholders aware of what our students need and what they're experiencing.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. And is that something that's offered to all students school-wide?

William Wright: Yes. It's offered to all students school-wide. We put it in all of our communications to parents, like in our newsletters and things like that. On our social media pages, we always try to provide tidbits. And like I said, we do

monthly workshops to help make sure everybody is getting the education that they need.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so much. And Tamara, bounce over to you.

Tamara Sobel: Sure. About other policies. Again, this is outside of my work at Media Literacy Now, but I've consulted on other areas. There's certainly a lot of policies schools need to have in terms of we talked a little bit about school use in the classroom as a policy. And I think Dr. Radesky said kids really want some limitations on that to help them out. So I think that's sort of a trendy or trending thing right now as to really schools are thinking about, "What is our policy on having cell phones in the classroom, in the school?" I think it is hard to enforce, but I certainly think the direction is schools are really taking that kind of policy and taking a look at it more seriously.

There are policies geared toward how do you react to a particular event that need to be in writing and need to be a policy. There need to be policies as to what is the code of conduct with social media platforms of the school with parents, staff, teachers, students. Everybody needs to agree to a code of conduct that's civil and responsible and safe. So putting those policies in place, having them spelled out is very helpful, and a lot of school districts are doing that.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Right. And we heard it mentioned that having that consistency is helpful for young people but also for adults, for us to understand what does it look like here in this space and does it look the same in the cafeteria or the library or wherever. Right. Absolutely. Thank you so much for that. The next area that I'd like to talk about is we've been talking a lot about policies, and we know that some states have legislation. Some schools have individual policies outside of statewide requirement. But we also know that those kinds of requirements might be a little distant and they can be slow to happen. So what can educators and other school staffs do specifically to find resources and/or to support their own professional development in this space so they understand? We're going to have a nice conversation about that starting with you, Tamara.

Tamara Sobel: Right. So one thing in terms of... I think I'll address the resources separately, but yes, there are laws. States have laws about what's required in their educational systems and those laws, at Media Literacy Now, we're working to change those laws, to modernize them and to update them to include media literacy education. And by the way, that's a broad umbrella term that includes digital citizenship, digital wellness, all these ideas that we're talking about today, safety, online safety. All these come under the umbrella of media literacy. So at Media Literacy Now, we're working to change laws state by state to make sure that states are acknowledging how important this is.

But because it takes a long time to change laws, there are also other things people in the education community can do. So for instance, standards and frameworks that are developed by the board of education. In most states, they are and they're updated. It should be ideally. So they ask for input from the

education community. So for instance, health standards are being updated on a national level and also on state levels. So it's great for the educators to chime in and say, "We think there should be more attention to these areas, to online safety, to digital wellness and media literacy." And once the state board of education, if they hear that and take that into account, then they can be developing standards, as well as resources and professional development for teachers. So hopefully everyone's working together, acknowledging how important this is in the world we live in.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you. And Mr. Wright, you want to add to that conversation?

William Wright: I just feel as though it's important. Just as we support academic curricula, we need to support any type of safety curriculum for our students. We support their social, emotional development, but we also... And a part of social, emotional development, most programs have a digital citizenship or online safety component. So we just need to make sure we're putting money and time into programs to help our students get what they need. Because like it was said earlier, we assume students are getting these things at home, but sometimes they're not. So if we're able to help provide them with the tools they need to be successful, because technology is going to be a part of schools probably from this point on for the remainder of future. So we want to make sure they're able to make good decisions and be safe while online.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. And it's also helpful, as you mentioned earlier, to make sure that educators and other school personnel are also getting trained because some of us are not on social media or don't have that... You called it being digitally native. And so we need to be able to make sure everybody can understand what's going on in that space. I'm going to ask one more question before we move into our Q&A. And this is about buy-in. So how do you communicate what you're doing to address cyber bullying, harassment, digital literacy, media literacy to students, to your colleagues, to caregivers, to communities? So it's essentially getting everybody to get on board with this concept. Mr. Wright, would you like to begin this conversation?

William Wright: Sure. We start the year off with our big parent meeting, and we make sure our parents understand that we are here to support them in all areas of their child's academic experience. We announced all our programs that we have. Luckily in the schools, October is National Bullying Awareness and Prevention Month. So we do a lot during that month to make sure that the students understand that bullying is a zero tolerance, but at the same time, when it happens, whether it's in school or online, we are here to support. Like I said, we have our newsletters that we send out. We do a lot on our web pages. It's just about making sure that people understand the resources that are available to them. And we make them accessible to them, whether it's online, we try to make it convenient for everybody, so that no one has an excuse to say, "We didn't know," or, "We could not find help." And that's something that we have to make sure we do.

You have to run an advertising program just like everything else people want to do to get their buy-in. Have a great marketing program. Spend time. Spend money. Send it out frequently. And you'll get the response that you need.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. There's one more thing that I'd like if you're okay with going a little deeper. When you and I talked, you had mentioned how you utilize the students themselves to educate their parents and take that message home. Can you briefly tell us a little bit about that and how that works?

William Wright: Sure. We started a group called The Watchmen, and that's a group of students who we work with. We train them and they are our watchmen, anything that's going on in the school, anything they may hear about. We train them to be peer supporters for their peers, and then they're also able to take that information home, talk with their parents. We educate our students about going home and doing technology with their parents to make it family time. We've learned two things. Students have the account that their parents see and then students also create ghost accounts. So in case you didn't know, parents, sometimes your kids have a ghost account that you don't know about that they're using and that's the account that parents want to know.

So parents have to be in their students' business per se. You have to know what your child is doing. Check their email. Check their phone. But then at the same time, we try to help our students know that you can trust your parents and they should be a part of what's going on with you. But yeah, but our Watchman group is a very important group here at our school because they're kind of like our secret spies. That's how we found out a lot of things that are going on at school, and it helps us to deal with issues in a way that keeps everybody safe. Yes, ma'am.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so very much. And Tamara, would you like to add?

Tamara Sobel: Yeah. That's a very interesting program. And we do find that peer-to-peer programs in general seems to be so effective. But yeah, I think that when we look at the surveys, it shows that most parents believe that we need to be talking more about digital citizenship, digital literacy, digital wellness. So they're for it. And most students and young people themselves are for it. And the classes that teach media literacy and digital wellness, they're highly engaged. Young people are really engaged in these classes. And we all know that when young people are more engaged, they're learning more. So it's not really a hard sell, I think.

And from a policy level, it's a very bipartisan issue because this is our kids' health and safety, and it's not Republican or Democrat. So people from all walks of life and different sides of the aisle really want this. We all want this. So as far as how we talk about it, we don't often have to sell it very hard. Everyone really wants to see our kids educated and empowered and safer. So I enjoy the work because there's not much resistance in terms of from the families, from parents and even from educators. I think tech may have a little problem of trying to change, but that's a whole another conversation.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. Understood. Understood. And I know that we as adults can learn so much, like learning how to turn off your notifications on your computer, for example. It's a small thing, boy, does it make your day less chaotic. And I see you laughing, Mr. Wright, but that was a good lesson for me personally. What I'd like to do now is I'd like to do a quick closure, and then we're going to come back and we're going to field some of the questions that have come in through the Q&A.

So we just want to put out a reminder to everybody who's on the webinar that you have an opportunity to go to bestpracticesclearinghouse.gov and to NCSSE website at safesupportivelearning.ed.gov to gain more information and resources on this and other topics related to school climate and learning. And we welcome you to contact us with your questions, concerns or requests. We're very excited to hear from you, and we're so appreciative that you spent your time with us here today.

On another note, we have several upcoming webinars coming in November and December. You can see them listed here. One of them is from our human trafficking and child exploitation series focusing on addressing child labor exploitation. And then in December, we have two coming out of our free to learn miniseries. The first one is on creating a welcoming environment that encourages all students to come in your doors and stay in your schools. The second one is about that full student participation and how we can encourage students to engage fully in school, in the classroom and in extracurricular and really in all ways so that once they're in the doors, they stay with you and stay present and engaged.

I'd also like to encourage everybody to take a few moments and click on the link for our feedback form, which will be going into chat in a moment. We really do take your comments and questions very seriously, and we use it to guide future content development. And in fact, some of our webinars that you've probably already participated in have come from those feedback forms, so it only takes a few minutes. You're going to go ahead and click that link to give us some feedback, and we will keep the webinar open for a few minutes after we close so that you can grab that link.

And now I'd like to go back to the questions that have come in through the Q&A feature and also from registration. And if you have questions that are still lingering, please do use the Q&A button to ask those questions. So one of the questions that I'm seeing here is can either of you speak to how social media or other digital platforms that you may have used with young people or see in use with young people how they can have a positive influence on violence prevention and school safety?

Tamara Sobel: I'm sorry. Am I... here?

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Yep. Yep. Go ahead. Yeah.

Tamara Sobel: Okay. Right. Certainly there are positive uses of social media. I think one of our earlier speakers talked about there's this sort of black and white kind of coverage, at least in the news media, that it's either all horrible or it's never a problem. In these discussions of online harms, which is so important, we do sometimes not spend too much time on the good parts. So there's certainly apps that are meant to be for positive mental health, for relaxation, meditation. There are people accessing mental health services via digital means, and that may be for people who think there's a stigma or somehow it's not convenient to go see someone in-person. So there's certainly positive uses of all the connections that technology and social media bring. And in terms of crisis situations in schools, certainly communications are important. Unfortunately, we have these school shootings situations and other terrible threats that are in the schools. So certainly we need social media and other ways of communicating when there are emergency situations.

And in general, parents want to stay connected through social media and websites of the school, and they want to be involved with the school, and that's always a good thing. We know that young people who have more parental and caregiver involvement are at an advantage, so... I think there are good things that come of all the technology we use and sometimes we don't pay a lot of attention to them.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. Thank you. Mr. Wright, would you like to join in?

William Wright: I just want to add in. It's all about the message that's being sent. Some people use social media for the intents that they were developed for, spreading positive messages. I've seen students who promote positive messages daily, promote the positive things going on in their lives, in their families. So it's just about using the platforms for what they were designed for, but it's meant to be positive originally, so... Yeah.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. And providing that education that you both have talked about so that folks understand and young people understand how to use it in that positive light.

William Wright: Exactly.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. Absolutely. Another thing that you had mentioned obliquely is are the resources and training that educators and other school personnel might need in order to be able to effectively engage students in this area. Do you have any either training or resources that you might recommend that would help schools work on incorporating teaching safe social media use?

William Wright: Right. Our district is currently using Common Sense Media, and I heard some of the other speakers talk about some of the different platforms, but that's where our district is currently using Common Sense Media.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Yeah. Is there a particular part... Are you using the digital citizenship curriculum for them?

William Wright: Yes, ma'am. Yes.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you. And you're finding it to be effective?

William Wright: Yes, ma'am. And we're finding ways to just make sure that... For elementary students, we have to add some more personal things that we built ourselves just to make sure they stay engaged, but yes, ma'am, it's been pretty effective, especially with our middle and high school students.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Excellent. Thank you so much. Tamara, would you like to join in?

Tamara Sobel: Sure. Common Sense Media, their curriculum are very well known, and again, we don't endorse particular curricula, but certainly that's a great resource. And there are many others we just share information about, although we're not endorsing one or the other. The Digital Futures Initiative is also an interesting resource. Cyberwise.org and Future Ready Schools from All4Ed, these are all groups and organizations that are putting out guidance for teachers and curriculum modules. And I think there'll be more and more as we realize how important this is. So I think it's good to start somewhere. Look at the resources that are out there. Tailor them to your particular community. That's a good place to start.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: I'm so glad that you mentioned the tailoring because I think that that's so important. It's got to be culturally relevant to your school and your community. And that means taking what's out there sometimes and then tailoring it to the needs of your students in that moment, for sure. And what's also wonderful about many of these resources for the audience is that many of them are open source, free to use. And again, there's still data being collected on evidence-based and what have you, but as Tamara said, we have to start someplace. And so these are some strategies that you can try and see how it works with your students. Sure. And then... Let's see. We already talked about the policies a bit, so I think we're good on that one. Are there any sites, or maybe they're the same ones, that you would recommend to give to parents? Would they be the same resources that you just mentioned? Or are there additional ones that would be good for parents to use to work with their student?

Tamara Sobel: Can I step in here?

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Yeah. Please do. Yes.

Tamara Sobel: Okay. Well, so certain sites like Common Sense Media will have a section for educators and a section for parents. So that's an interesting way to channel that. There's another organization called the Digital Wellness Lab here in the Boston area, and they have something called a Family Wellness Guide. So this is really more for parents to understand their child's development and how media used at different stages is healthy or maybe not as healthy. And I actually recommend... That's such an interesting resource to me that it actually helps educators too. It says it's for parents, but there's so much information on child development and media use, about how they intersect. So I think educators find

that interesting also. So there's a lot out there. I think it's just a matter of getting started. And I think today you all will put in the notes here a lot of those resources that people can begin with.

William Wright: Right.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Yes. For sure. Go ahead, Mr. Wright.

William Wright: I was just going to add that most bullying resources will have an online component, a cyber bullying link, and they'll have a lot of resources on those pages as well. So if you go to any bullying resource, I think bully.gov, and then just go through the different things, you'll be able to find a lot of resources there as well.

Cindy Carraway-Wilson: Absolutely. Absolutely. Well, we're just about at time. So I want to thank you both so much, both for the work that you're doing with your students, the work that you're doing in your communities and for your taking the time out of your day to participate with us today. You have been invaluable and given us amazing resources and ideas. You can see your reaction icons going up and they've been going up the whole time. I'm not sure if the two of you have been noticing. So you've been getting lots of hearts and claps and thumbs up. We also want to thank the audience for hanging in there and staying with us through until 4:30 to be able to hear some of the responses to your questions. If we didn't get to your questions, as I said, we will be sending them off to the speakers and to the Department of Education for future guidance. We want to thank you all very much for being here today. And I wish you a wonderful rest of the day and a great week. Thank you so much.