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Watch Children Online and Be the “Best Voice”

Parents must know what their children and teens are saying and doing online. Those that believe their children are protected from the evils that lurk behind screens could be fooling themselves. Recent events in Virginia show just how dangerous online activity can be for young people.

A child named Nicole survived a liver transplant and other medical challenges, but through online activity she became a murder

victim. Details of the crime are sketchy, but how a Virginia Tech college freshman from Maryland first gained access to the girl is clear by tracking her online history. At least one of the students used a social media site or sites to “meet” Nicole, and later lured the thirteen-year-old girl into sneaking out of her home in the middle of the night. An 18-year old male and a 19-year-old female student are charged with various crimes resulting in the January murder of Nicole, a Blacksburg, Virginia middle school girl.

The child’s “death has heightened scrutiny around certain social media apps, where adults with inappropriate intentions can have ready access to children online.” Nicole used the instant messaging app Kik, along with Facebook and Instagram. “In many social media posts, [Nicole] projected a girl who was heartbroken, suicidal, and deeply vulnerable.”

Nicole was a frequent poster whose friends were concerned about her online activity. One allegedly alerted a school resource officer about her interaction with adult males, but the police say they received no such report. (*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 2-6-16)

Nicole’s father says she’d been given her phone back after being “grounded” from it because her parents found out she’d been “chatting inappropriately online with older men.” (*Associated Press*, 2-9-16)

No motive for the murder has been revealed and certainly nothing will ever adequately explain it. This isn’t the only horror story about depraved young people that one can find. Schools no longer teach morals, many children don’t attend church or have any spiritual foundation. Many find themselves floating in a universe of nihilistic angst. Parents must be ever vigilant to guide their own children and to protect them from the lost and from predators.

A Cautionary Tale

For the first time since her son went on a killing spree at Columbine High School in Colorado, Dylan Klebold’s

mother has spoken. In an interview on ABC “20/20,” she said she thought she was “a good mom,” and that she knew what was going on in her son’s life. She ignored warning signs, writing them off as normal adolescent behavior. She says, “I think we like to believe that our love and our understanding is protective, and that ‘If anything were wrong with my kids, I would know.’ But I didn’t know, and it’s very hard to live with that.”

Sue Klebold regularly looked through Dylan’s room when he was a high school junior. If she had searched his room during his senior year, she would have found journals and other items indicating her son was deeply disturbed. She says, “Part of the shock of this was learning that what I believed and how I lived and how I parented was an invention in my own mind — that it was a completely different world that he was living in.” (*ABC*, 2-12-16)

Dylan Klebold played computer games and made movies about which his mother knew nothing. In the years since the Columbine killings, it has gotten even more complicated for parents to know what children are doing, with online activity having become ubiquitous.

Children and teens who go completely off the rails and either commit or become victims of crimes are the exception. But parents who want children to grow into stable and healthy adults must be aware that dangers to their safety and to their innocence lurk behind screens.

Action Plan

Parents should be prepared to know what actions children and teens take online. They must stop worrying that they are bothersome. Children have plenty of friends. What they need from their parents is guidance.

Experts interviewed on the 20/20 show offered suggestions that might be helpful for parents wishing to monitor their children.

- “Parents know their child’s behavior patterns better than anyone, so parents should look out for changes in their kid’s mood or behavior that seem out of place.” President of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Gregory Fritz, M.D. says to watch for changes, like sleeping late that becomes staying in bed all day, or complaints about food that become a refusal to eat.
- Parents should pay attention to their instincts and not ignore feelings that something is going wrong with a

(See *Children Online*, page 4)

Doomed D.C. Scholarship Program

When the record-busting omnibus spending bill was passed by Congress and signed by President Obama in December, one small ray of hope that some Washington, D.C. students would be well educated failed to be included. The budget includes about \$1.5 trillion in “explicit spending and another \$622 billion in indirect spending.”

Students in the District of Columbia Opportunity Scholarship Program are underprivileged, the program is successful, and it actively engages and empowers parents. Of all the pork that could have been eliminated from the federal budget, why was the very education success that politicians and educrats clamor for revoked? The answers are political. Teachers unions, which heavily support Democrats, don’t approve of scholarships to private schools. And professional lobby-

ists didn’t lobby for this program.

Since it was signed into law by President Bush in 2003, the Opportunity Scholarship Program has offered funding for about 6,000 students, allowing them



to escape poor public schools and get a private education. These lucky ones, among the 17,500 students who have applied since 2004, receive vouchers amounting to less than half what their local public school spends per student.

More than 95% of recipients of these need-based scholarships are African-American or Hispanic, three out of five families received food stamps, and they had an average household income of \$21,434, in the past year.

The 2014 Opportunity Scholarship program graduation rate was 90%, com-

(See *Doomed Program*, page 4)

Are Schools Ruining Childhood?

More than two years ago, child and adolescent psychotherapist Katie Hurley wrote an article claiming that Common Core is ruining childhood. She said her 6-year-old daughter had four or five tests each week. Hurley wrote, “The people behind the Common Core might think that they are ensuring college/career readiness, but what they are really ensuring is a generation of anxious robotic children who can memorize answers but don’t know how to think.”

Hurley listed five ways Common Core is destructive to students. Her reasons can be summed up: Creativity has been replaced by busywork; Academics always trump socializing, even for very young children; Schools aren’t allowing children time to eat or



to have recess; Even children in lower grades are doing hours of homework, making time at home equally stressful as that spent at school.

She wrote: “It’s time to rethink the Common Core. Stress is dangerous and impacts physical and emotional health. It’s no way to live, and it’s no way to raise our children.” (*Huffington Post*, 10-25-13)

Tearing Up a Kindergartener’s Paper in Rage

A widely seen video shows a teacher at Success Academy charter school in Brooklyn, New York, yelling at and shaming a kindergarten student who didn’t correctly answer a math question. The classroom assistant had secretly

filmed the lead teacher in 2014 because she was concerned about “the daily harsh treatment of the children.”

The video is disturbing. It shows a teacher who’s not in control of her emotions. The child starts to answer the question, becomes confused, pauses, and looks at her teacher.

As described in the *New York Times*:

The teacher takes the girl’s paper and rips it in half. ‘Go to the calm-down chair and sit,’ she orders the

girl, her voice rising sharply. ‘There’s nothing that infuriates me more than when you don’t do what’s on your paper,’ she says, as the girl retreats.

The Success Academy manual doesn’t promote this sort of behavior by teachers. It indicates that “teachers should never yell at children,

‘use a sarcastic, frustrated tone,’ ‘give consequences intended to shame children,’ or speak to a child in a way they wouldn’t in front of the child’s parents.” This kindergarten teacher failed every one of those mandates.

When the video was discovered, the teacher was suspended for little more than a week. Then she was back in her classroom. This teacher was held up “as an exemplar within the network,” and “the network promoted her last year to being a model teacher, who helps train her colleagues.” (*New York Times*, 2-12-16)

Tricking Children into “Loving” Tests

A kindergarten teacher named Bai-

(See *Ruining Childhood*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Only 54% of Los Angeles Unified School District seniors are “on track to graduate” from high school this June. Massive efforts are underway to place students in special “credit recovery” programs, a controversial way for students to quickly make up classes they’ve failed. The district’s school board already lowered requirements last June, changing the minimum passing grade from a C to a D. L.A. Unified graduation rates had previously been climbing, having reached 74% in 2015. (*Forbes*, 2-12-16)

If further evidence was needed that there are flaws in the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education law, called the Every Student Succeeds Act, it has arrived. The liberal-leaning National Education Association (NEA) teachers union has named U.S. Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Patty Murray (D-WA) to be co-recipients of its annual Friend of Education award “for their efforts in shepherding ESSA through Congress.” Alexander will be the first Republican to receive the award since 1984. (EIAonline.com, 2-22-16)

Eleven choir members on a field trip to a singing competition from the affluent Grosse Pointe South public high school became ill after eating marijuana-infused cookies. Adult chaperones were unaware that students had the drugged cookies, which police say were supplied by two recent graduates who got the pot from a current medical marijuana card holder. As punishment, the 11 students who were all aware that the cookies were drugged won’t be allowed to go to Ireland with the choir to compete. (Fox2Detroit.com, 2-11-16)

The number of Americans supporting school choice, the right of parents to determine where their children attend school, has grown to 70%. Those polled say they’re 64% more likely to vote for candidates who support school choice, and that rises to about 76% among hispanics and millennials. (Watchdog.org, 2-18-16)

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Educational Cronyism

Those who worry that government officials use their jobs as a jumping off point to bigger things are paying close attention to certain events surrounding the U.S. Department of Education. Obama associates are part of a group purchasing a for-profit college that the government has previously criticized, resulting in its lowered value. The wife of Arne Duncan’s replacement has taken a job that could result in conflict of issues with her husband’s position. Arne Duncan looks to be moving on to big career advancements since resigning his cabinet position.

Arne Duncan is a Star!

Jennifer Aniston, Lady Gaga, George Clooney, Tom Hanks, and Arne Duncan. What do they have in common? They are all reportedly clients of Creative Artists Agency (CAA), a Los Angeles-based talent agency. CAA represents people from Bruce Springsteen to Katie Couric. Plus former Bruce, now Caitlyn, Jenner.

A 2007 article in *Fortune* indicates that at CAA, teamwork is everything. “Celebrities” aren’t represented by just one agent but, instead, information is shared among all areas of the company and everything is done for the advantage of clients. “The agency said that it ‘will create opportunities for [Arne] Duncan across all areas, including books and speaking, as well as identify new business ventures.’” (*Variety*, 2-8-16)

In what alternate universe does a man go from heading the Department of Education to needing such representation? The same one where a former First Lady, now presidential candidate, has given many speeches for which even public colleges pay huge fees. (Along her road to amassing an astonishing net worth, Hillary was paid \$300,000 by the University of California at Los Angeles for a speech in March of 2014.)

Conflict of Interest

Melissa Steele King, wife of Acting Secretary of Education John King, has been hired by Bellwether Education Partners. Mrs. King has been named an associate partner at Bellwether, which was co-founded by Andrew Rotherham, who Diane Ravitch calls “a leading force in the corporate [education] reform movement.” (DianeRavitch.net, 2-18-16)

It is an understatement to recognize that there might be conflict of interest issues when the spouse of the man in charge of American education is an ex-

ecutive at this education organization.

The Bellwether website says they have “the highest commitment to transparency,” so they provide a list of their “partners.” But they fail to indicate which are clients and which are funders. A list of these “partners” of Bellwether includes: NEA Foundation, PARCC Consortia, Chiefs for Change, Sylvan Learning, Teach for America, ACT, Inc., Harmony Schools (Gülen charter schools), K12 Inc., Thomas B. Fordham Institute, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Microsoft Corporation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

President Obama reportedly sought to avoid Congressional confirmation for Mr. King by having him remain “acting” Secretary. But King may now face confirmation hearings. Besides exploring Mrs. King’s Bellwether situation, Senators might initiate questioning about John King being whisked out

of his position as New York Education Commissioner and into the administration when outraged New York parents demanded his dismissal because he gave every appearance of refusing to listen to their misgivings about Common Core.

Many say John King’s January 2015 move to the Acting Deputy Secretary of Education position in the federal government was a way to rescue him from being fired in New York.

President Obama’s Friends

It appears that The University of Phoenix will be sold. The largest for-profit university has been victim of a “determined effort on the part of the Obama Administration to kill it off,” according to an article in *Forbes* (2-15-16). Any sale of The University of Phoenix, which is owned by the Apollo Education Group, will require approval by the U.S. Department of Education. This may not pose a problem for those who wish to purchase it since they have close ties to the Obama administration.

Anthony Wilder “Tony” Miller, who was Obama’s Deputy Education Secretary from 2009 to 2013, is the head of Vistria Group, the intended buyer of the University of Phoenix organization. Another Vistria Group “top official” is Martin Nesbitt, who some say is President Obama’s best friend. Nesbitt supported Obama’s 2004 Senate bid and was treasurer of his 2008 presidential campaign.

(See *Cronyism*, page 4)

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Book of the Month



Teaching from Rest: A Homeschooler’s Guide to Unshakeable Peace, Sarah Mackenzie, Classical Academic Press, 2015, \$12.95



This gem of a book is full of inspiration, as well as practical advice. Although intended for an audience of Christian homeschoolers, Sarah Mackenzie’s guidance would help anyone to better educate children.

Mackenzie suggests that childhood and the homeschool experience should be one that families look back on and describe as “warm, conversational, and infused with truth, goodness, and beauty.”

She says that homeschoolers should worry less about specific curricular choices and more about the entire experience of the child and the family. “If we don’t know where we’re going, what our purpose is for our children, our homeschool, and our family culture, it will be impossible to know what should go and what should stay.”

Mackenzie says *how* you teach is as important as *what* you teach, meaning atmosphere is critical. More than just “covering material,” learning occurs when children are taught in a manner that allows them to love it, to think logically, and when they are encouraged to realize their full potential. She emphasizes, “Meaningful learning happens when our children wrestle directly with great ideas — not as a result of our repackaging those great ideas, but when they interact with the ideas themselves.”

She says to avoid all “that becomes a series of checkboxes and canned activities in our efforts to prove that learning is happening, even when it isn’t.”

Mackenzie includes many practical tips, such as that parents should integrate subjects. She offers as an example reading *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, which includes “wrestling” with history, geography, writing, vocabulary, theology, and philosophy.

Other tips are: Keep it simple — don’t fall for gimmicks. Read to and allow children time to read every day. Students should write and do math daily. Allow time for review. Allot more time during each subject than the actual lesson plan is projected to take, which allows breathing room for exceptional days. She says, “If education is in part an atmosphere, then creating an atmosphere of peace should be of utmost importance.”

Mackenzie finds that six-week terms, followed by a week during which she reassesses, eliminates anxiety over lesson plans or any impulse to precipitously ditch curriculum. She determines any needed changes once the term concludes.

The author relays advice that experienced homeschoolers have offered to her. They say to “focus on relationships, to help my children preserve wonder and perceive truth, and to do each day’s work as diligently as I can.”

FOCUS: Are Public Schools Teaching Your Child An Alternate Religion?

by Julie Roys

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Would you send your children to a Muslim school? I have yet to find a Christian parent who says yes to that question — and the reason is obvious. We don't want our kids indoctrinated into Islam. We want them to become Christians.

Yet, currently in the United States, 84% of Christian parents send their children to schools teaching an alternate religion. These schools may be billed as religiously neutral, but make no mistake: public schools are religious institutions, enthusiastically promoting the religion of secular humanism.

Now, I realize that may sound extreme or fundamentalist. But trust me, I'm not making this up. In addition to reading widely on this topic, I've also raised two adult children, who regretfully spent several years in the public school system. But, my greatest insight into public schools has been through my husband, who has taught in them for more than 30 years. He is the one who opened my eyes to the religion being promoted in public schools. And interestingly, when he shares this view with students, they wholeheartedly agree.

In recent years, my husband has had the unique privilege of visiting a comparative religions class at his school to explain Christianity. And, each time, he presents Christianity as a comprehensive worldview and contrasts it with what he perceives to be the prevailing religious worldview at his high school — secular humanism. Based on the framework described in Nancy Pearcey's book, *Total Truth*, my husband explains that every worldview has three components — an origins narrative; a "fall" or explanation for the cause of suffering; and a redemption story, or way to end suffering.

He then argues that in his school, the origin narrative is evolution: you are the result of random processes and are no different than an animal. The cause of suffering is socially constructed rules that inhibit your freedom, especially your sexual freedom. And, the way to end suffering is to reject these rules, which typically stem from Christianity. So, in essence, salvation is found by rejecting Christianity.

"Yup, that's right," students typically respond. Interestingly, no student has ever objected to my husband's description of his school's religious worldview. In fact, when he describes it, most experience a sort of "Aha!" moment.

So, in light of this reality, I ask you: Should Christians send their kids to public schools? Last Saturday, I considered

this question on my radio show, "Up for Debate," as I have several times in the past. And every time, the question elicits strong opinions and emotion. And, I usually hear the argument that the education of our children is a very personal issue; it depends on the child; and no one way is better than another way. That, of course, sounds very reasonable and non-judgmental. But, is it really true?

In Deuteronomy 6:7, God commands his people to teach his commands "diligently to (their) sons," instructing them to "talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." I admit that as young parents, my husband and I didn't understand this verse as a command to provide our children with a Christian education. We figured it would be enough to apply this verse to our interactions with our children outside of school. But, years later, when someone challenged me to think about how this verse applies to education, the implication was inescapable. The verse says to teach your children about God 24/7. Why would that not include the intentional, formal instruction of our children?

Other verses carry a similar message. In Ephesians 6:4, fathers are commanded to bring up their children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Proverbs 22:6 tells parents to "train up a child in the way he should go." Scripture also warns about sitting under the influence of those who are hostile to God. Proverbs 13:20 says, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." In Luke 6:39-40, Jesus says, "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher." Psalm 1 says, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. . . ."

How is placing our kids in a secular humanistic institution for their most formative years not a violation of these verses?

When I argue this case, though, I usually get a fair amount of push-back and hear some common defenses for sending kids to public school. But do these arguments actually hold up to scrutiny?

Common Reasons Parents Send Kids to Public School:

1) "My School is Different"

A veteran public school teacher from Las Vegas called in to my program Saturday, challenging the notion that all schools promote secular humanism. Sure, some do, she said. But for decades, she said she's promoted Christianity in her classroom and has made a practice of

praying with students, as well. She's also made it a practice to tell her students that she's praying to Jesus during the 30 seconds of silence that begin each day. And, during parent-teacher conferences, she said she often discusses family issues with parents

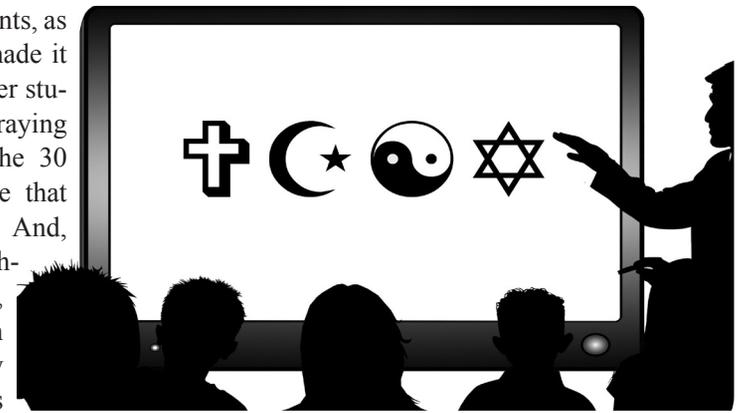
and prays with them about those issues, as well. In fact, the influence of Christians is so strong at her school that the school once hosted a Christmas program where overtly Christian Christmas carols were sung. "So things can change in our public school system!" she said — if only more Christians would get involved.

The problem with what this teacher described, as one of my guests noted, is that it's illegal! Ever since the landmark Supreme Court case in 1947 that erected a "wall of separation between church and state" — and the 1962 case, which outlawed school prayer — it is illegal for public school employees to promote Christianity. The only way to introduce a Christian worldview back into the public schools would be either to change the law or to encourage Christian teachers to violate the law. Given that the latter would violate the admonition in Romans 13 to submit to authorities, I would not recommend it as a solution. And, given that our courts increasingly are ruling against Christian liberty, and the prevailing culture is hostile to Christianity, I don't think there is any chance we will re-introduce Christianity into our schools any time soon.

2) "Christians Kids Need to Be Salt & Light"

Yes, we need to teach our children to share Christ with unbelievers. But seriously, would any of us send an undeveloped, vulnerable child into a hostile mission field? Again, Scripture teaches parents to nurture and instruct their children, not send them as missionaries to a pagan culture. In 1 Timothy 3, we are told that leaders in the church should not be recent converts because they might fall into sin. Certainly, this same principle should apply to missionaries. Many children aren't even converts, but they certainly are not mature believers. To me, sending children as missionaries is ludicrous. It's also not working.

According to a study by Dr. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute (nheri.org), 75% to 85% of public school children from Christian homes abandon their faith as adults. However, less than 10% of homeschooled children leave the faith as adults. Similarly, the Nehemiah Institute (NehemiahInstitute.com) found that 80–85% of public school students from



Christian homes have secular humanistic worldviews. But, only 3% of students attending schools that intentionally teach a Christian worldview have secular humanistic worldviews. Clearly, how we educate our children makes a difference.

3) "We Can't Afford Christian School or Homeschool"

Money, I believe, is the biggest impediment to Christian education. In fact, a Barna study (Barna.org) found that public school is the first choice option for only 26% of the population. So, many send their kids to public schools out of necessity, and for no other reason. Economics is also likely a major reason why the homeschooling population is largely white.

Surprisingly, though, the fastest-growing segment of homeschoolers in the country is African-American. And, a significant proportion of these are single moms, showing that it can be done. But it takes an incredible amount of sacrifice, and increasingly, I believe the church needs to lend a helping hand.

However, educating our kids biblically is worth the sacrifice. Our family actually downsized our home several years ago, specifically so we could send our kids to Christian schools. And last year, we were actually paying twice our mortgage in our kids' tuition each month! But, nurturing our children's minds has been worth it. And, even though my husband and I are always teaching our kids at home, we have seen a huge difference in our children's worldview formation since attending Christian schools.

So, given our experience and the clear teaching of Scripture, I would send my kids to public school only if there was absolutely no other option. But, I'm a believer that God normally provides options when we earnestly seek them.

Julie Roys is a speaker, writer and host of Up for Debate, a nationally syndicated talk show on the Moody Radio Network. A graduate of both Wheaton College and the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, Julie is respected for her ability to tackle difficult conversations with both courage and fairness. Julie blogs at JulieRoys.com and her articles have appeared in World Magazine, The Christian Post, Hermeneutics, and Boundless.org webzine.

Children Online (Continued from page 1)

child, whether it's something [seemingly] to be bothering them or they seem to be shutting down.

- "It's important for parents to talk to their child from a place of love instead of demanding their child to tell them what's wrong." Use active listening techniques. Psychologist Dr. Mary Ellen O'Toole, a former FBI profiler, gives one example of inquiry: "The reason I'm talking to you is because I love you, and I don't want anything ever in the world to hurt you, and I know you're sad and I know . . . your world is very dark right now, but I love you this much, that whatever we need to do, we're going to do."
- "For parents, normal rules of privacy don't always apply." Have children's and teens' passwords and use them. Don't be afraid to monitor their online and social media activity. (ABC, 2-12-16)

Work on Communication

A critical part of keeping children safe online is open communication. Experts stress the importance of speaking to children about internet dangers and making sure that they would tell you if they see disturbing images online or if anyone contacts them in a suspicious or too familiar manner. Parents often discover potentially dangerous situations just by asking questions and by engaging their children in conversations about computer and cell phone use.

Kids use computers and cell phones to facilitate communication. It's important that parents keep lines of communication with their children open. Knowing that their parents want to know what troubles them goes a long way toward keeping children and teens safe. Parent who offer assurance that they are willing to know what's really happening in kids' lives offer security and validation when they are approached with concerns, even when what children say is disturbing.

Don't expect children who don't regularly communicate with parents to all of a sudden open up about online activity. Good communication is the result of years of preparation and groundwork. Family dinners during which parents and children share events of their day and admit challenges they've faced are important. Casually spending time together, whether playing games, on commutes, or coming alongside to do chores, allows quiet time for communication to happen. Just asking "How was your day?" will

rarely get any response except "Fine."

Cyber Tips

Computers should be located in a communal area where adults can read what's posted. There are ways to know which websites children visit and what they are writing online. If parents choose to allow young people to have cell phones with data, there are ways to track what they do.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation Cyber Division offers important tips in "A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety," which can be found at FBI.gov. As the introduction to this pamphlet says, "While online computer exploration opens a world of possibilities for children, expanding their horizons and exposing them to different cultures and ways of life, they can be exposed to dangers as they hit the road exploring the information highway."

Other specific guidelines and solutions can be found at NetSmartz411.org, which is operated by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

Parents might also consider monitoring services, such as uKnowKids, CreepSquash, NetNanny, or MinorMonitor. Some parents use controls and content blocking such as that offered by OpenDNS Family Shield or a web browser such as that available at CovenantEyes.com. Keep in mind that some security measures don't work when children visit other homes.

Adults should be familiar with cell phone apps like Kik, SnapChat, Poof, YikYak, Whisper, Vine, and Tinder. Those who hope to protect innocence warn parents not to be naïve or uninformed because there's a good possibility that their children are not. In this technology-savvy age, parents must stay ahead of the game and know more about what is going on than their children do. It's a challenge worth the effort.

Nicole's father said in a television interview with Dr. Phil McGraw, "I wasn't there for her when she needed me." (2-10-16) This grieving father is now on a mission to warn other parents. He says:

It's not spying on your children. It's not being intrusive to plug-in and know what's going on. These days you have to know where your children are all the time. If they're back in their bedroom, you think they're doing their homework and in fact they're online talking to people that they may not know. You're not the only voice in your child's ear so you need to make sure you are the best voice in your child's ear.

Cronyism (Continued from page 2)

Nesbitt is also Chairman of the Barack Obama Foundation, the nonprofit group that will build the presidential library in Chicago.

Writing in *Forbes* about the sale, the American Enterprise Institute's Richard Vedder, who directs the Center for College Affordability and Productivity and teaches at Ohio University, says, "I know of absolutely no impropriety." But he also notes that "appearances are not

good." Vedder writes:

The Obama people bash the for-profit industry, wiping out billions of market capitalization and sending some big operators (e.g., Corinthian Colleges) into bankruptcy. The largest survivor, careening from continual attacks and subsequent falling enrollments, Apollo, saves itself by selling itself to a group of Obama friends and former subordinates.

Doomed Program (Continued from page 1)

pared with 58% at D.C. public schools. Among Opportunity Scholarship recipient graduates, 88% enrolled in two- or four-year colleges.

In 2004, Sheila Jackson's daughter wasn't doing well in math at her D.C. public school, but she found teachers unwilling to help her. When Jackson heard about the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP), she enthusiastically enrolled her daughter, who became valedictorian at her private school and is now a college student majoring in biology. Sheila Jackson is currently on the OSP board and will fight for its survival.

The program was almost eliminated by President Obama and the Democrat-controlled Congress in 2009, when they prohibited new applicants. Outraged D.C. parents fought back and the program was eventually saved by the new Republican majority in 2011, specifically

ly through the efforts of former Speaker John Boehner.

Founder of the Center for Urban Renewal and Education (CURE), Star Parker, calls the new federal budget "a grand structure on which every political interest imaginable has hung its own pet program." Parker and D.C. parents who expected the OSP to be renewed for five more years were shocked when it wasn't. Lawmakers allowed the Opportunity Scholarship Program to be stripped from the budget at the last minute. Some place particular onus on the Congressional Black Caucus that would seem to have a vested interest in continuing a program that ensures the successful education of young people of color.

Unless Congress takes specific action to reinstate the program, it will disappear after the 2016-17 school year. (UrbanCure.org, 12-22-15) (*Wall Street Journal*, 2-12-16)

Ruining Childhood (Continued from page 1)

ley Reimer wrote an article for a Chicago school news outlet explaining how her "kindergartners came to love testing." This young teacher says, "The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) affirms the value of collecting test data as a way to look at student progress." She believes, "As teachers, we have a chance to build a culture around testing that allows students to understand its value and the opportunities that come with it."

Reimer says, "I love tests that give me relevant, timely information about how my students are doing, from how many letter names they know to how many words per minute they read." Many would say that a kindergarten teacher should be able to assess her students' progress just by spending hours a day with them, during which



she can observe them. But it is obvious by her support for ESSA that this teacher has bought into the top-down, federal government-led, data-collection education system.

She says, "In my class, testing is one of the best tools to get students excited about how much they are learning." She continues, "Many schools, like mine, opt to start preparing students as early as kindergarten. This way they can make sure that students and teachers take full advantage of the benefits of testing."

Even Reimer admits, "Of course, 5-year-olds don't come to school automatically loving testing. As educators, it's our job to build that appreciation and understanding."

She says that all kindergarten teachers can be as successful as she is in convincing young children to willingly submit to testing. She writes that "when it is time to announce an upcoming test, students can look like mine: smiles wide, fully attentive, delighted to show what they can do." (Catalyst-Chicago.org, 1-11-16)

While Ms. Reimer celebrates her classroom of kindergartners' "delight" about testing, others may see young children trying very hard to please their teacher, any way they can manage.

Getting Tough on Kindergartners

Reports of how kindergarten has changed aren't just anecdotal. University of Virginia researchers documented differences in the "views and experiences" of kindergarten teachers in 1998 and those of "their counterparts" in 2010. They found "dramatic differences in what teachers now expect of pupils and how they have structured their classrooms."

In 2010, 80% of kindergarten teachers believed children must learn to read in kindergarten, compared to just 31% in 1998. In 1998, almost 60% of kindergartners had the opportunity for weekly "dance or creative movement." By 2010, that occurred in only about 40% of kindergarten classrooms. In 1998, about 90% of kindergarten classrooms had a "dramatic play area" and an art area. By 2010, drama areas were found in under 60% of classrooms and an area devoted to art was offered to fewer than 3/4 of kindergarten students. (*Education Week*, 2-10-16)

Keep in mind that 2010 was only the start of the Common Core push to make kindergarten fully "academic," just the first time "experts" were officially preparing the youngest for "college and career." It is almost certain that opportunities to engage their imaginations, for creative art and dance experiences, and any other semblance of fun childhood experience has greatly diminished for 2016 kindergarten students. No wonder fewer enjoy school. This is no way to treat 5- and 6-year olds.