

February 11, 2015

I am a Kansas resident, tax payer, and parent of two children in the public school system. Last year, my son, who was in 6th grade was asked to take the Kansas Communities that Care survey ("Care") during class. He told me about it as he was disturbed by it. In fact, he instinctively knew that it wasn't right to be asked these questions on this survey and even asked his teacher part way through the survey, if he must complete it. Her answer was a problem in itself, but that is another issue. I asked the school for a copy of the survey. I was and still am furious about it. There is no way in which someone or some organization should feel that it is ok to ask these questions of children. They have no right to these answers or this information which is private and of a personal and in many cases even incriminating nature. This organization, and unbelievably with the schools' compliance, have dared to ask these questions of children, while they are not in the company of their parents, but at school where they trust that they have to do as they are told. It is outrageous to me that any organization would ask that such a survey be administered at school and even more outrageous that the schools have agreed to do so. As such, I strongly believe that any surveys given to our children or any data gathering of any kind should require parent prior approval. I might not have thought so before seeing this survey, but after seeing it, it is clear to any clear thinking parent that our children's privacy, and even our own, is not being safeguarded by current laws (or prior to SB 367, at K. S. A 72-6215 – 72-6223 being passed) or practices within the education system.

I will add to this account that my son said that the survey was brought up by one of his friends at the school lunch table as this friend asked the others, "Did you like that survey?" All agreed that they did not. If one can still remember what it was like to be a 6th grader, they will recall that discussing what one actually did during class time was never a topic of conversation around the lunch table, especially for boys. So for this survey to have been so on the mind of these 6th grade boys that they checked in with each other about it to confirm that their friends felt the same way about it as they did, is very telling. It is sad and shameful that adults would subject kids to this.

Lastly, if anyone hasn't read the "Care" survey, I highly recommend doing so. Besides being extremely intrusive and self-incriminating, it is also eye opening to many 6th graders. Most have probably never heard of the drugs asked about in the survey, nor have ever considered doing most of the things that were asked about. I am of the camp that believes that surveys such as this one can do only harm in that they actually educate kids on such deviant behaviors and lead to more of it. However, these questions were less disturbing than the ones that asked if the student had ever thought about doing such things as, I believe it was, lying or cheating. This is over the top big brother "1984" like to ask about one's thoughts. As an American, I would never have expected my child to have been asked such questions and to have had their answers recorded at or by their school.

I made my opinions known to my son's school last year and have since been consulted first regarding all surveys and assemblies that my son is to participate in. This particular "Care" survey should not be allowed at all in the schools, period. But, regarding all surveys and data collection, parents ought to have to "opt in" rather than "opt out." It is regrettable that it has come to this, but the distribution of such a survey demonstrates that it has.

It is my understanding that SB 367, at K. S. A 72-6215 – 72-6223 was passed to strengthen data privacy. I support that legislation and any legislation that may further strengthen data privacy. And, I firmly oppose HB 2099. Only a parent can be trusted enough to be fully responsible for safeguarding their child's privacy.

Regardless of whatever good or noble intentions an organization such as Kansas Communities that Care may espouse, they cannot be as good or noble as our right to privacy as American citizens. And we parents should not be put in a position in which in sending our children to public school, we are no longer able to protect our own children's right to privacy.

Thank you for your time and I hope that this committee will weigh its decision regarding these bills and any others pertaining to the very important issue of privacy very carefully, and furthermore, come down on the side of protecting our and our children's privacy.

Thank you,

Janet Di Palo