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**News story**

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## **Elementary School in East Setauket (NY) Doesn't Walk the Walk About Bullying**

After the 1999 Columbine massacre and shootings in schools across the country that followed it, many schools put antibullying and antiviolence programs in place. Quite a few even installed video cameras on school buses to document and stop bullying. But though XYZ Elementary School, in East Setauket, New York, talks the antibullying talk, it doesn't want to spend the money to walk the antibullying walk.

Two parents seek to do something about that. Edward and Katharine O'Moore-Klopf, whose youngest child is a first-grader at XYZ, will attend the November 13 meeting of the board of education of the LMNOP School District and ask the board to consider either paying for aides to ride all district school buses or requiring the bus companies with which the district contracts to install video cameras on all school buses.

At the end of October, Katharine O'Moore-Klopf informed the school about bullying behavior that had been directed at her son for months by another first-grade boy on the bus. Her son's teacher and the assistant principal handled the situation well. They talked with both boys and notified the other child's parents. The O'Moore-Klopf's son is no longer hit or tripped by the other boy. However, another child on the bus, a third-grade girl, intentionally clawed their son's hand late last week when he reached back to adjust his clothing around his neck. Discussions with the parents of the boy who once bullied the O'Moore-Klopf's son and with other children who ride the bus have produced a picture of kids out of control on the bus.

After the incidents with the first-grade boy, Ms. O'Moore-Klopf asked the assistant principal about the possibility of paying aides to ride the buses and was told that that would entail expensive background checks on applicants. Ms. O'Moore-Klopf also contacted the chairperson of the safety committee of XYZ's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) by e-mail about raising funds to pay for aides. The chairperson replied: "I am sorry to hear your son is having a hard time. I highly recommend that you immediately contact [the principal or assistant principal] yourselves. I know that they take the matter of bullying very seriously and would want to hear from you. As far as your proposal for aides to ride the buses, I am sad to say that in our current budget climate, this is not at all likely to happen. Programs and instructional staff are being cut left and right. I do not think a PTA meeting is the right forum for your concerns. I urge you to call the principals about this, as it really, really beyond the scope of the PTA's safety committee. We are asked only to provide support on school grounds for snow days, early dismissals, concerts, etc."

The O'Moore-Klopf's will provide board of education members with printouts of news stories about school districts that have used video cameras to reduce violence on buses (see [this](#) and [this](#)). The *Boston Globe* reported recently that some school buses in Massachusetts have been using video cameras for years. As Thomas Tatro, director of business and finance for Middleborough schools in Plymouth County, Massachusetts, said to the *Globe*, "I'm surprised that there are still school districts that don't have cameras on their buses." The *Globe* quoted the American Civil Liberties Union as saying it doesn't object to the cameras on buses because buses are public venues. It's time for XYZ Elementary School and the LMNOP School District to catch up with the times and protect its students.

The board of education will meet at 8 p.m., Tuesday, November 13, 2007, at EFG Junior High School, 456 Street Road, Richtown, NY; EFG's phone number is 123-456-7890. The district superintendent and president of the board of education is Fred L. Moscatelli, whose phone number is 123-890-6543. XYZ Elementary School is located at 19 Wealthyburgh Drive, East Setauket, NY; the school's phone number is 123-456-2300. The XYZ principal is Jane Doe; the assistant principal is Elaine Moe.