

washingtonpost.com

## Va. Student's Snow-Day Plea Triggers an Online Storm

By Michael Alison Chandler  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Wednesday, January 23, 2008; A01

Snow days, kids and school officials have always been a delicate mix.

But a phone call to a [Fairfax County](#) public school administrator's home last week about a snow day -- or lack of one -- has taken on a life of its own. Through the ubiquity of [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#), the call has become a rallying cry for students' First Amendment rights, and it shows that the generation gap has become a technological chasm.

It started with Thursday's snowfall, estimated at about three inches near Lake Braddock Secondary School in [Burke](#). On his lunch break, Lake Braddock senior Devraj "Dave" S. Kori, 17, used a listed home phone number to call Dean Tistadt, chief operating officer for the county system, to ask why he had not closed the schools. Kori left his name and phone number and got a message later in the day from Tistadt's wife.

"How dare you call us at home! If you have a problem with going to school, you do not call somebody's house and complain about it," Candy Tistadt's [minute-long message](#) began. At one point, she uttered the phrase "snotty-nosed little brats," and near the end, she said, "Get over it, kid, and go to school!"

Not so long ago, that might have been the end of it -- a few choice words by an agitated administrator (or spouse). But with the frenetic pace of students' online networking, it's harder for grown-ups to have the last word. Kori's call and Tistadt's response sparked online debate among area students about whether the student's actions constituted harassment and whether the response was warranted.

Kori took Tistadt's message, left on his cellphone, and posted an audio link on a Facebook page he had created after he got home from school called "Let them know what you think about schools not being cancelled." The Web page listed Dean Tistadt's work and home numbers.

The Tistadts received dozens more calls that day and night, Dean Tistadt said. Most were hang-ups, but at one point, they were coming every five minutes -- one at 4 a.m., he said. At the same time, his wife's response was spreading through cyberspace.

Within a day, hundreds of people had listened to her message, which was [also posted on YouTube](#). A friend of Kori's sent it to a local television news station, and it was aired on the nightly news program. As of yesterday, more than 9,000 people had clicked on the YouTube link. Hundreds of comments had been posted on the Facebook and YouTube pages, largely about what constitutes proper and polite requests for public information from students.

Advertisement



**Life Insurance**

It's one of the greatest gifts you'll ever give your family

10-Yr Level Term Life Insurance \$500,000 Policy (monthly premiums)		
age	male	female
35	\$16.19	\$14.00
40	\$21.88	\$19.25
45	\$34.56	\$28.00
50	\$56.00	\$39.38

**Click Here**  
Get a Free Quote!

**ACQUOTE**  
Saving You Money For Life

One Oakton High School student said in a posting yesterday that the crank calls to the Tistadts' home were out of line but that Kori's call was appropriate. "I am not happy that [Dean Tistadt] gambled multiple times with our safety just so we might have a bit more knowledge crammed in our heads at school," he wrote.

A [Westfield High School](#) student agreed: "thank God someone stood up for us at last!"

Some were just as adamant the other way. A student from James Madison High School in [Vienna](#) wrote: "It's called a home phone number for a reason. My dad is a physician and I can't tell you how irritating it is to get calls at all hours of the night from people who think they are entitled to immediate attention . . . leave the poor guy alone."

Kori, a member of the Lake [Braddock](#) debate team who said his grade-point average is 3.977, said his message was not intended to harass. He said that he tried unsuccessfully to contact Dean Tistadt at work and that he thought he had a basic right to petition a public official for more information about a decision that affected him and his classmates. He said he was exercising freedom of speech in posting a Facebook page. The differing interpretations of his actions probably stem from "a generation gap," he said.

"People in my generation view privacy differently. We are the cellphone generation. We are used to being reached at all times," he said.

Kori explained his perspective in an e-mail yesterday to Fairfax County schools spokesman [Paul Regnier](#). Regnier said, also in an e-mail, that Kori's decision to place the phone call to the Tistadts' home was more likely the result of a "civility gap."

"It's really an issue of kids learning what is acceptable and not acceptable. Any call to a public servant's house is harassment," Regnier said in an interview.

Kori said that he was called into the principal's office to discuss the matter but that he was not punished.

Candy Tistadt did not return phone messages, but Dean Tistadt credited Kori for having the "courage of his convictions to stand up and be identified." He also credited him for causing the high volume of crank calls, not to mention considerable grief and embarrassment for his wife.

"This has been horrible for her," he said, adding that he and his wife both learned a hard lesson about the long reach of the Internet.

### Post a Comment

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules](#) governing commentaries and discussions. You are fully responsible for the content that you post.

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

© 2008 The Washington Post Company

**Ads by Google**

**[Experience the excitement](#)**

Young people learning by experience Successful entrepreneurs & citizens  
[www.entrepreneursnow.org](http://www.entrepreneursnow.org)

**[Host an Exchange Student](#)**

High School students from 75+ countries. Find one today.  
[AYUSA.org](http://AYUSA.org)

**[School Safety Hotline](#)**

Prevent violence, suicide! Safety Hotline Service since 1999  
[www.Report-it.com](http://www.Report-it.com)