



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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*Enhancing the mental health and
educational competence of all children.*

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April 21, 2009

Ms. Oprah Winfrey
c/o Harpo Productions Incorporated
PO Box 909715
Chicago, Illinois 60690

Dear Ms. Winfrey,

On behalf of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and our 26,000 members, I would like to thank you for choosing to cancel your show on the 10-year anniversary of the Columbine tragedy, scheduled to run yesterday. Your decision not to air a show that focused intensively on the actions and psyche of the shooters demonstrates your commitment to the public welfare over the possibility of boosting ratings with sensationalism.

NASP is one of the leading advocates for school safety, youth violence prevention, and school mental health services in the country. School psychologists support the safety, well-being, and academic success of students across the country every day. With regard to violence prevention, they serve on school crisis teams, develop prevention and intervention services, provide threat assessment and intervention, and help parents, teachers and other educators understand how best to recognize and intervene with students at risk of violence of any kind (including suicide and self-harm).

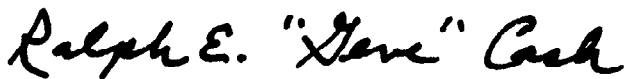
A number of well-written books have come out in recent months that have helped drive media coverage leading up to the Columbine anniversary and the second anniversary of the Virginia Tech shootings. However, our school crisis and violence prevention experts have expressed concern that much of this coverage has focused primarily on the perpetrators and the anatomy of the tragedies. While it is important for people to understand the facts and for experts to comprehend the deep psychological problems of individuals prone to violence, highlighting the killers' actions, thoughts, and motives only helps to memorialize them. As you seem so clearly to understand, this does not contribute to improved safety for our children and school staff and may actually risk spurring copycat behavior from other at-risk individuals.

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Keeping our children safe is a tremendous responsibility for parents, educators and members of the broader community. NASP remains committed to supporting this important purpose. We provide extensive resources to the public online at http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/schoolsafety.aspx. We also partner with other education and mental health organizations to promote collaboration and consistent messages on how best to make schools safer. For example, a joint op-ed with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), which ran in the *Denver Post* yesterday, outlines some key priorities (<http://www.denverpost.com/guestcommentary>). I have also attached for your information a joint letter sent to the media last month, signed by more than 20 education and mental health organizations on this topic.

Again, thank you for your obvious concern for using the powerful platform of television responsibly and in the best interest of children and youth. Your popularity is well-deserved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph E. 'Gene' Cash". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ralph E. "Gene" Cash, PhD, NCSP
NASP President
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