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To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in support of the programme developed by John parsons addressing the risks associated with how young people use the internet and related technology.

As an Alternative Education teacher I deal daily with at risk young people and more and more frequently I am seeing the internet as having harmful outcomes for my students and their peers. Bullying seems to me to be a common occurrence on the internet and through text messaging. Young people seem extremely naive around the image they are portraying of themselves on the internet and the long term consequences that may result. Whether this is postings of them in an intoxicated and/or embarrassing situation, sexual exposure or simply offensive comments the result is that that representation of them is now accessible world wide and cannot be erased. The mistakes and bad decisions that all teenagers make are no longer private experiences between the individual or individuals involved but are now often publicly and permanently recorded for all to see.

Female students in particular are becoming more exposed to the risk of harm through themselves or others inappropriate photos of themselves posted on social networking sites. They also often give out personal information such as their age, cell phone number and even addresses to people on the internet even though they do not actually know them. Last year there was one serious case in particular where I was involved in supporting a young person through the police inquiry. The weight of responsibility the current generation faces in regard the technology available to them is greater than it has ever been before.

John Parsons has developed an easy to understand module of teaching safety skills to young people around the internet. It is interactive, interesting and highly relevant to their every day usage of technology. The students he has introduced it to at the YMCA all engaged in the session and had positive feedback afterwards. It is my belief that every young person should be given the education they need to protect themselves and make good choices around the internet and related the technologies they use. The possible consequences for these young people are too great to ignore and are already visible in the community.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can assist further.

Yours faithfully,

Talia Walker  
YMCA Alternative Education teacher

We build strong kids, strong families, strong communities.  
*Me whakahangaia hangaia e matou, i nga tamariki,  
i nga whanau, i nga hapori e*