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A spotlight can help end child sexual abuse

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Some influential voices are being heard lately regarding child sexual abuse: editorials and articles on the devastating case of [slain 11-year-old Sarah Haley Foxwell](#); [D.C. Schools Chancellor Michelle A. Rhee's comments in Fast Company magazine](#); allegations against a veteran Sidwell Friends School teacher; pedophiles and adult survivors featured on "Oprah"; and legislative hearings on the sexual abuse of incarcerated juveniles. And? Is anything consequential going to be done to protect kids?

Much of the talk misses the mark. We need to really address the problem: educate adults; implement policies and training in schools and other youth-serving organizations to minimize the risk; give parents and caregivers needed support to manage the challenges of parenthood; and invest strategically in prevention.

The D.C. Public Schools and Sidwell should take a page from [Beauvoir School's response to discovering child sexual abuse](#) in its midst in 2008. Beauvoir acted -- swiftly, deliberately and wisely to inoculate its community against future risk. It updated policies and implemented Stewards of Children prevention training for all its employees. Just as important, school leaders talked openly with parents, faculty and staff about the problem, the fears and the risks. Beauvoir recognized that child sexual abuse thrives on secrecy, shame, darkness and denial.

What better way to defang this beast than to shine as much light on it, from every angle possible, all the time?

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