

West Virginia Deploys Skyll Movie Games Across All Schools as Sextortion Emerges as Fastest-Growing Threat to Teens

Nitro High School pilot shows over 90% of students reporting safer online behavior; state accelerates rollout to reach 240,000 students

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EINPresswire.com/ -- West Virginia has begun the nation's first statewide rollout of mandated interactive online safety education, reaching 240,000 public school students through [Skyll's](#) Movie Games™ platform. The initiative comes as federal authorities report a rise in sextortion-related youth suicides, including cases in the state.

In November 2024, 15-year-old Bryce Tate, a sophomore at Nitro High School, died by suicide after being a victim of online sextortion in an attack that lasted less than three hours. He never had the opportunity to participate in the online safety program that is now being rolled out. His death has underscored how quickly these attacks unfold and how little time families have to intervene.

"We cannot bring Bryce back," said Sheriff Mike Brown (Ret.), founder of the [Safe Surfin' Foundation](#) and former administrator of the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces. "But we can make sure every student in West Virginia has the tools to recognize these attacks before it's too late." "We're moving as fast as we can to ensure that," added Eddie Worth, President of the Safe Surfin' Foundation.

Research from Snap found that 51% of U.S. teens have already been targeted by sextortion attempts, and 23% reported they were blackmailed.



The first implementation of Movie Games™ across West Virginia produced measurable outcomes. Ninety-seven (97%) percent of students said they were more likely to recognize a sextortion attempt after completing the game. Ninety-six (96%) percent reported being more aware of where to get help if they or a friend were being sextorted. Ninety-two (92%) percent said they were more likely to recognize suspicious or dangerous online activities, and ninety-one (91%) percent said they were more likely to question whether an online profile or message was real before responding. Eighty-nine (89%) percent reported being less likely to share a private photo or personal information online.

Students also expressed high engagement with the curriculum. “I’m invested in the story. I NEED to know what happens,” said one Nitro High School student during the pilot. Another student described the experience simply: “I really like it. It’s engaging and fun.”

“Students don’t typically ask for more mandatory training,” said Graeme Page, CEO of Skyl. “But they kept playing. They wanted to know what happened to the characters. That emotional investment is what makes the learning stick.”

Movie Games™ are interactive stories where students make decisions, see consequences, and navigate situations involving sextortion, cyberbullying, digital manipulation, and mental health. Instead of receiving warnings in a lecture, they practice real-world recognition and response skills through narrative. The stories use peer-to-peer modeling, allowing students to see characters their age face the same pressures they do, and to step into the role of the main character as they learn how to respond.

West Virginia’s Senate Bill 466, championed by Sheriff Brown and the Safe Surfin’ Foundation, is the first law in the nation requiring comprehensive online safety education for students in grades 3–12. Full implementation begins with the 2025–2026 school year.

The Nitro pilot was supported by Phillips Corporation and InstaProtek. “As a company that builds safe and resilient infrastructure, we also care deeply about building safe and resilient communities,” said Emily Torgerson, Senior Vice President of Communications at Phillips Corporation. InstaProtek provided tablets to select students who completed the training. “True protection goes far beyond screens and hardware,” said CEO Roger High. “It’s about the safety and well-being of the young people who use these devices.”

Skyl develops Movie Games™ for mental health and online safety education, combining interactive storytelling with curriculum covering digital citizenship, AI literacy, financial literacy, and healthy relationships. West Virginia is the company’s first statewide implementation.

About Skyl:

Skyl is the first education platform to deliver mental health and online safety training through

interactive “Movie Games™”, choice-based stories where students make decisions, experience consequences, and build real-world skills. Developed with educators, law enforcement, and behavioral specialists, Skyll prepares students to navigate sextortion, scams, cyberbullying, digital manipulation, and the pressures of modern online life. The platform also provides curriculum in digital citizenship, AI literacy, financial literacy, and healthy relationships.

Unlike traditional lectures or presentations, Movie Games™ meet students where they already are: emotionally invested in story. The result is unprecedented engagement and measurable behavioral change. Skyll is headquartered in California, with partnerships across schools, districts, and statewide agencies. West Virginia is the first state to implement Skyll’s online safety curriculum statewide.

About Safe Surfin' Foundation:

The Safe Surfin’ Foundation is a national nonprofit organization committed to protecting children from online predators, exploitation, sextortion, and emerging digital threats. Founded by Sheriff Mike Brown (Ret.), a longtime leader of the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Forces, Safe Surfin’ provides safety education, forensic tools, training, and community outreach programs that strengthen online safety nationwide.

The Foundation partners with schools, law enforcement agencies, and state legislatures to design prevention-based solutions that keep youth safe in an increasingly digital world. Safe Surfin’ played a leading role in the development and passage of West Virginia’s Senate Bill 466, the first law in the United States requiring comprehensive online safety education for grades 3–12.

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