

- What are our Digital “Role Models” Modeling Online?
- The Ebb and Flow of Bullying Prevention in Schools
- How to Promote Inclusive Environments for Staff at Schools Without Bullying



NEWSLETTER Fall 2019

What are our Digital “Role Models” Modeling Online?

Dr. Sheri Bauman, *Professor of Counseling,
University of Arizona*

The old adage, “Do as I say, not as I do” was never very effective at getting youth to obey a rule or change their behavior. Unfortunately, in the current digital universe, we see a great deal of adult behavior that we would prefer our youth not emulate. We see politicians attacking each other on social media, disgruntled fans saying derogatory things about celebrities and athletes, and strangers engaging in vicious ad-hominem rhetoric online over an inconsequential news story. Hardly a day passes that there is not a news item about an incident of online trolling that is so malicious that people must leave their own homes to ensure their safety (e.g., Christine Blasey Ford). Although the term cyberbullying is generally applied to children and adolescents, we know that cyberbullying occurs in workplaces and in governments. In fact, 41% of American adults have been harassed online and 18% have experienced severe forms of digital aggression (Duggan, 2017).

The Southern Poverty Law Center (2019) conducted an informal survey of K-12 teachers (n=2776) who described incidents of hate speech or bullying based on politics, religion, race, ethnicity, and gender or sexual identity. The respondents indicated that students were invoking the language used by Trump in his campaign and targeting and frightening peers who are members of the groups maligned by the campaign and post-election tweets. Huang and Cornell (2019) analyzed data collected from middle school students in Virginia in 2013, 2015, and 2017. After finding no differences in rates of victimization or hate-based victimization prior to the election, they found that students who resided in districts in which Trump won the majority of votes reported 18% more bullying in the previous year and 9% more hate-based victimization since the 2016 election.

Several theories are helpful for understanding the importance of adult behavior as models for young people. Social ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) is widely cited as a framework for research on bullying. The theory is often depicted as a series of concentric circles, with the individual at the center, and each larger circle representing an influence that is slightly more distant from the individual. The outermost circle (which then influences all the interior ones) is the chronosystem, which includes not only one's life stage, but the social-historical context. In the current historical era, digital communications permeate our lives, and the political context is one that, by exhibiting harmful and hurtful digital behavior (most of which is protected by our First Amendment), impacts the individual child and adolescent's development.

Because social media are so widely used, and examples of adult digital aggression abound in these spaces, the social norms have been slowly altered. Social norming theory posits that humans behave in ways they believe is normative (common or usual) in the population. The more young people see digital aggression, the more normative – and therefore acceptable - it seems to be. Müller and Schwartz (2018) concluded that as a result of social media, social norms have changed so that prejudicial attitudes towards minorities that were previously not expressed due to social norms are now frequently articulated due to the changed social norms. Social learning theory, articulated by Albert Bandura (1977) helps us understand why these actions by adults – often very prominent adults – influence young people and normalize a behavior that is problematic at best, dangerous at worst. First, learning theory stresses that humans learn from experience, but that experience can be either direct or observed. When the behavior results in a favorable outcome, the individual is more likely to repeat it. When the behavior produces a negative or unpleasant result, the person is less likely to imitate that behavior. This occurs whether the behavior is enacted or observed in others. This is quite efficient. I don't have to burn my hand on my ceramic stovetop if I observe my husband doing so and shouting in pain – I can learn from his experience.

Bandura also describes how modeling by others influences our behavior. Social behaviors are learned partly by imitating models. Models who are most likely to be imitated are those considered powerful and attractive, and most like ourselves. Donald Trump is president of the United States, arguably the most powerful man in the world, and one who presents as an “outsider” to the political establishment - making him arguably more like the ordinary citizen. Attractiveness means more than physical appearance. To adolescents, who see photos of his gilded home, hotels, and resorts, his lifestyle is one they can easily see as successful. So, when this individual uses social media to attack others, calling them names, accusing them of alleged crimes, and demeaning persons of color, children and youth observe the consequences. What they see is increased attention, adulation at rallies, and a sense that the behavior enhances his popularity. Children and adolescents see those outcomes as desirable attainments, especially at a developmental period in which forming an identity includes a quest for social status.

Bandura (2002) also was concerned with moral behavior and proposed his theory of moral disengagement to explain the ways in which humans engage in acts that are contrary to their moral principles without feeling guilty. Moral disengagement is a cognitive process whereby we rationalize the behavior using selective mechanisms such as suggesting, for example,

that the action serves a higher moral purpose, that the target of the behavior either deserves the mistreatment or is less than human, that the harmfulness of the action is trivial, that others do worse things, and others. We observe these processes in the online behavior of the role models, particularly blaming the victim and dehumanizing the “other” who is then attacked online without guilt.

To return to the adage with which I began this piece, I submit that the media-immersed youth of our country see abundant evidence of cyberbullying by prominent adults who are modeling the behavior; slogans and taglines are not sufficient to outweigh the examples they perceive to be associated with fame and fortune and power. We need prominent figures – politicians, celebrities, athletes – to demonstrate effective ways to communicate displeasure online without denigrating others.

References

Bandura, A. (1977). Social learning theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-hall.

Bandura, A. (2002). Selective moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency. *Journal of Moral Education*, 31(2), 101-119.

Duggan, M. (2017, July). Online harassment 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.pewinternet.org/2017/07/11/online-harassment-2017>

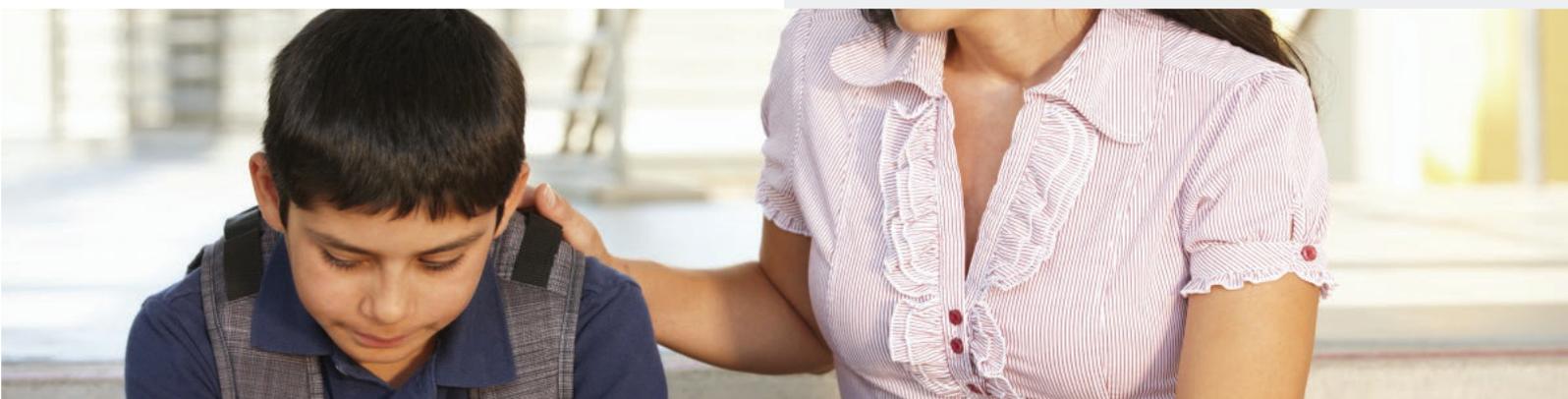
Huang, F. L., & Cornell, D. G. (2019). School teasing and bullying after the presidential election. *Educational Researcher*, 48(2), 69-83.

Müller, K. & Schwarz, C. (2018). Making American hate again? Twitter and hate crime under Trump. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Retrieved from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3149103>

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2019). Hate at school. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/tt_2019_hate_at_school_report_final_0.pdf

Dr. Sheri Bauman is a professor of counseling at the University of Arizona. She earned her Ph.D. in counseling psychology from New Mexico State University in 1999. Prior to earning her doctorate in 1999, she worked in public schools for 30 years, 18 of those as a school counselor. She is also a licensed psychologist (retired). Dr. Bauman conducts research on bullying, cyberbullying, and peer victimization, and teacher responses to bullying. She is a frequent presenter on these topics at local, state, national, and international conferences. She has authored and edited several books on bullying and cyberbullying in addition to more than 65 articles in scholarly journals. She is on the board of trustees of Ditch the Label, an anti-bullying charity based in the UK. Her newest book, *Political cyberbullying: Perpetrators and targets of a new digital aggression* will be available in November from Praeger Publishing.

SHARE THIS ARTICLE! ▶



The Ebb and Flow of Bullying Prevention in Schools

Stacia Walker, *Bullying and Harassment Program Coordinator*
Cedar Rapids Community School District

So, you've decided to adopt a bullying prevention program in your school district. You've spent months upon months researching and analyzing what bullying and harassment program best fits your school system, and you discover the perfect fit! There is district support, a team of staff is trained, and you are ready for implementation. What can go wrong?

As you are handing out fresh training materials and outlines, you get the first push-back. "Here we go again!" "What are they going to make us do now?" "I'm just too busy!" "My plate is already full!" And, they are right. Teachers have more and more pressures and expectations put on them than ever before. What now? How do you get staff buy-in and maintain enthusiasm?

For the past 12 years, I have had the pleasure of working with a district in Iowa consisting of approximately 7,800 students. I wore many hats in my position, and I was fortunate that one of those hats was to be a trainer and supporter of the bullying prevention program. It was an honor to be a part of implementing and sustaining a district-wide initiative that truly aimed to impact all students; guiding these efforts did not come without its ups and downs, however.

At first, the staff involved in the driving committee are extremely enthusiastic and energetic. Then, when the program is rolled out, there are those few neigh-sayers that bring down the energy. Once students are exposed to the new lessons, we start to see that the desired positive change

in school climate and the energy has returned. As time passes, we lose enthusiasm again as things are no longer “new” ...and so goes the ebb and flow of the implementation and sustainability of a program. Do not be discouraged by this! Most districts have the same experience. Here are some practical strategies to gain buy-in and keep it.

- **What is the why?** - As much as we want all staff to be passionate about bullying prevention, it might not be number one on everyone's list - they have an academic curriculum to cover. We can help these folks with their “whys” by providing and explaining data showing the time-saving impact of credible bullying prevention programs: if students feel safe, they will be more present in the classroom – both physically and mentally.
- **Beyond bullying** - First and foremost, a common language needs to be established: a definition of bullying, bullying prevention rules, and the roles within a bullying situation. Having a common language and understanding around bullying behaviors is crucial for bully prevention. However, the learning goes beyond language. Include lessons and activities focusing on relationship builders; these strongly support a positive and inclusive school climate deterring bullying behaviors, as well as build life skills in connecting and communicating with others.
- **Keep it fresh** - Lessons need to be revised on a regular basis. Once a lesson has been around for a while, it can become stale. Ensure the lessons are staying relevant to today's topics and evolving technology.
- **Invest in the program** - Ensure staff are provided with the materials needed to successfully implement the program, including time for the lessons to be carried out.
- **Make it a priority** - It is essential to have leadership buy-in and active

support. Higher-level leadership needs to engage staff in regard to the importance of the bullying prevention program. And this support needs to continue even after the program is fully implemented...staff should see and feel that their administration finds this initiative as important ten years down the road as on the first day of implementation. Passive support: simply saying they support the program but not providing the resources needed to implement the program and/or serving on the steering committee to assist in the guidance of the program, is NOT enough.

- **Continue the learning for all** - Staff training is essential for keeping bullying prevention at the forefront of school priorities and initiatives. This training needs to include ongoing boosters for returning classroom teachers and annual training for new classroom teachers. In addition to teachers, training needs to be available to all staff members including custodians, bus drivers, and food service personnel.
- **Remember the MTSS triangle** - Just as with academics and social-emotional programming, the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) applies to bullying prevention. 80% of students will respond from universal lessons and discussions, 15% will benefit from an additional layer of support (possibly in a small group setting), and 5% may need the highest level of individual intervention and support.

I have now personally embarked on a new adventure in my life of bullying prevention. This year, I had the opportunity to join the Cedar Rapids Community School District team, which serves over 16,000 students in Iowa. My position is newly-created, and the primary goal of this role is to implement a bullying prevention program district-wide. Having the privilege of impacting so many students' lives is an unbelievable feeling.

Districts of all sizes bring their own individual obstacles to the table. However, I am sure I will still encounter some of the same hurdles and joys as I did in a smaller district. Bullying prevention is crucial to our students' feeling of safety at school, which in turn impacts success at school. While there is an ebb and flow of implementation, focus on the joys and successes. You ARE making a difference in a child's life.

SHARE THIS ARTICLE! ▶



How to Promote Inclusive Environments for Staff at Schools Without Bullying

Dr. Mildred Peyton, *Founder & President*
Peyton Consulting, LLC.

Is it possible for staff to experience workplace bullying in schools? Given that our nation's current school climate is significantly focused on school safety and bullying prevention activities/programs for students, some would mull over this question...it may be considered a paradox, especially when teachers, counselors, or school administrators are the ones who are expected to protect students from bullying. Nonetheless, the resounding answer is, yes. As a workplace bullying survivor and expert, I can confidently tell you that workplace abuse can happen not only in school settings, but in any work environment if the ones who are in charge of the establishment do not consider their employees' safety and wellbeing their priority (or as a part of their work culture). This notion is congruent with the American Federation for Teachers (AFT), which affirms that: "Sometimes workplace bullying is the result of workplace culture, where behaviors of bullying are entrenched in an organization and have become accepted practice." Simply put, our perceptions or expectations can influence the nature and culture of work environments in both good and bad ways, be it in schools, corporations or organizations.

Imagining that workplace bullying is happening in some schools is hard enough to digest. Articulating workplace bullying as a concept, and recognizing when it is happening, is perhaps even more difficult. It is also not talked about as often as school bullying among children; therefore, it may appear that workplace bullying is not as prevalent among workers. But in actuality, this problem among employees is just as common a phenomenon as childhood bullying in schools. A 2017 survey by the

Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) concluded that "60.3 million U. S. workers [alone] are affected by workplace bullying" as a witness or a direct target. Also, in 2018, a qualitative research study in the Journal of The Education Forum concluded that teachers (n = 276) felt they were targets of bullying by their school administrators because of their affiliation with the teacher union, their age, and their behaviors. These teachers also asserted that their administrators bullied them out of jealousy, power, having teacher traits, different styles of teaching, and being hired by a previous administrator. What this suggests is that there are countless reasons why an individual could experience workplace bullying. Whatever the perceived reasons are, bullying is wrong, and it is equally bad for those involved. For example, according to experts' conclusions from the WBI, targets of workplace bullying may develop physical illness and experience psychological effects like anxiety, depression, chest pains, headaches, elevated blood pressure, cardiovascular problems, and other stress-related diseases. It can also force victims to quit their jobs without properly securing a financial cushion – resulting in an economic burden for individuals and families. This financial devastation can also cost employers a hefty amount if faced with legal suits and loss in employee productivity. Based on Business Woman Media, "The Australian Human Rights Commission has estimated that up to \$36 billion dollars is lost each year from Australian businesses due to the effects of workplace bullying."

So, why are we not hearing more about bullying in the workplace in the media or elsewhere (as we are hearing about school bullying)? From my personal and work experiences, one reason is that most adults who are experiencing unfair treatment or harassment at work would rather stay quiet because of shame and fear of retaliation or retribution that could result in losing their jobs.

Even though these are all contributing factors as to why this topic may not make front headlines, the truth is that it's an international problem. Case in point, a study among teachers in South Africa suggested that workplace bullying is a widespread problem - with 91% of the teachers (n = 999) who participated in the study stating that they've experienced workplace bullying of some form. So, no matter where we reside, bullying is unfortunately an unpleasant side of human nature; one for those who especially crave power and control over others.

Workplace bullying is an unhealthy practice in any organization, but even more so in places where adults are expected to model appropriate behaviors to children. As a start to dissolving this issue, here are **five (5) simple strategies** on how school districts can promote inclusive environments that can help prevent bullying among their staff:

- Leaders must be educated about workplace bullying and held accountable for that knowledge; the key to solving any problem is to become aware. Leaders should participate in mandatory leadership training that provides tools and techniques in healthy management styles/effective leadership, and follow-through in correcting behaviors that are against policies.
- Create a safe space to get to know your staff; know what matters to them (understand their backgrounds and perspectives). This can look like a routine check-in on staff where meetings are held individually or in a group, a "meet-my coworker" social event, or surveys to better understand employees' current states in their work environment. Taking this approach will not only increase employee engagement, but it'll also boost morale and increase retention. When employees feel valued and believe their contribution matters, they perform better and stay at their place of work.
- Celebrate staff often: Teachers' Appreciation Week is great; however, administrators must be intentional and find different ways to celebrate their staff frequently.
- Provide sensitivity training/workshops that include lessons on self/cultural/social awareness: Working with others is a great way to learn about views and understandings that are different from our own and could make excellent contributions to the team.
- Establish and maintain a work culture that's equitable and fair: Everyone deserves the same opportunity to succeed without biases attached.

Essentially, inclusion must be a key component in any working environment that wants to thrive. When it is applied at workplaces and schools, it means that everyone's voice can be heard rather than being bullied into silence.

References:

- American Federation of Teachers. (n.d.). Workplace bullying. Retrieved from <https://www.aft.org/position/workplace-bullying>.
- Defendi, Daniel. (2018, May). The real cost of workplace bullying. Retrieved from www.businesswomanmedia.com.
- Orange, Amy. (2018, September 25). Workplace Bullying in Schools: Teachers' Perceptions of Why They Were Mistreated. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00131725.2018.1461523>.
- Wet, C De; Jacobs, L. (2013, December). South African teachers' exposure to workplace bullying. Retrieved from pdfs.semanticscholar.org.
- Workplace Bullying Institute-WBI. (2017). 2017 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey. Retrieved from www.workplacebullying.org.

Dr. Mildred Peyton is an American Expert in school and workplace bullying. She's also a national children's author and the researcher of Exploring the Meaning of School Bullying Among Parents of Victimized Children. Dr. Peyton is the Founder and President of Peyton Consulting, LLC- a bullying prevention firm that provides services to schools, individuals, companies, and youth organizations. To learn more about Dr. Peyton please visit her website at www.drmildredpeyton.com.

SHARE THIS ARTICLE! ▶



16TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Kindness &
Compassion:
Building Healthy Communities
Conference

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2019
Marriott Hotel on Magnificent Mile • Chicago, Illinois

KEYNOTE PRESENTERS FROM:
Sesame Street in Communities,
Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation,
Microsoft, Instagram, Google, Roblox, Twitch,
Fair Play Alliance, Two Hat Security
AND MORE!

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



SPACE IS LIMITED, REGISTER TODAY AND YOU WILL
BE CERTAIN TO LEARN NEW STRATEGIES, GAIN NEW
TOOLS AND BE INSPIRED!

www.ibpaworld.org

☎ 800-929-0397

✉ info@ibpaworld.org