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# Who Is the Real Bully? Teacher Bullying and Occurrences in Racially-Disparate Classrooms

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Teacher Bullying, which can be defined as any of many malicious abusive behaviors or comments toward a student, has been documented and studied by researchers. These behaviors have profound and long-term negative effects. Many of America's students can speak to its existence. The research brief highlights teacher bullying and places particular attention on this form of abuse in racially-disparate classrooms. Included within this brief is a review of previous studies on teacher bullying; (b) explanation of associated outcomes of peer bullying; (c) details of connections between student-teacher interaction and the effects of bullying; (d) details related to the relevance of racially-disparate classrooms and racism; and (e) findings from qualitative data of teacher-imposed teasing, bullying, and abuse collected from among randomly selected, Black American college students. Recommendations for action are also provided.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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With a master's degree in English from the University of North Florida, an educational specialist degree in information science and learning technologies from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Florida A&M University, Patrice has held instructional and leadership positions in higher education. In addition to authoring curricula and online course content, her research on Black student activism was recently (July 2020) highlighted by the Samuel Dewitt Proctor Institute. She also has publications in the *Journal of Negro Education*, *Negro Educational Review*, *Thought and Action*, *Academic Advising Today*, other peer-reviewed journals, as well as several book chapters and edited book projects.

In addition to exploring teacher behaviors, Patrice's research interests include (a) standing against social injustice, (b) online teaching and learning, (c) the psychology of hope, and (d) exploring factors that impede or advance Black student achievement. You can reach Patrice at [pwglenn@yahoo.com](mailto:pwglenn@yahoo.com).



School bullying is most often examined and studied among students. Peer bullying is widely accepted as a major issue that impacts self-efficacy and student achievement, particularly among K-12 students (Konishi, Hymel, Zumbo, & Li, 2010; Strøm, Thoresen, Wentzel-Larsen, & Dyb, 2013). Likewise, peer bullying has been said to interfere with student achievement (Cornell, Gregory, Huang, & Fan, 2013; Strøm, Thoresen, Wentzel-Larsen, & Dyb, 2012) and promote delinquency, violence, and antisocial behaviors in adulthood (Bender & Lösel, 2011; Farrington & Tfofi, 2011). Although peer bullying has been widely researched, within the scope of school bullying exists another source of distress--that between the teacher and the student.

Teacher bullying, also referred to as teacher abuse, emerged as a definable concept in the 1990s. While it is likely that incidents of teacher bullying date back to the beginning of compulsory schooling, Olweus (1996) defined teacher bullying as arrogant, sarcastic, or repetitious teacher behaviors or comments toward a student. Teacher bullying, as presented herein, differs from bullying of teachers, which is a different phenomenon that examines the victimization of teachers. A decade after Olweus's proposed definition, Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, and Brethour (2006) offered a different definition for teacher bullying as a teacher's use of power to disparage, manipulate, or punish a student beyond an acceptable level. This level of 'acceptability,' along with the unpleasantness of this topic, is a probable reason for the limitations in teacher bullying literature. Furthermore, teacher bullying takes on many forms to include neglect, as well as physical and emotional abuse, all of which can be subject to interpretation or opinion. Like most professional, service-oriented careers, teaching is a challenging endeavor fraught with responsibility. However, unlike most other professionals, teachers are directly responsible and liable for their daily engagement with society's most vulnerable population—children. Teachers are expected to guide, nurture, and protect their students. However, all teacher behaviors do not correspond with the aforementioned responsibilities, and witnessing teacher bullying in action highlighted the threat of this malicious abuse of power and its implications, particularly among a group of marginalized students.

While touring a school to consider for my elementary-aged sons, I entered a third-grade classroom. The teacher, a beyond middle-aged White woman, was antagonistically belittling a student because she was not finished with her assignment. The teacher was standing over the seated student, speaking loudly and aggressively. The teacher attacked the child with words

and insulted her. The teacher did so with clear disregard for the eight parent visitors, one school leader, and a community volunteer in her room. This suggested, to me, that this behavior was not only normal, but she perceived it as acceptable. The scene was difficult to watch. The student, a Black girl among an all-Black group of students, was withdrawn and silent, with her head and body in a retreated position. I felt concern for the student and for the psychological, developmental, and socio-emotional health of every student in that classroom. Was this behavior an example of teacher bullying?

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to amplify the magnitude of teacher bullying and place particular attention on this form of abuse in racially-disparate classrooms. This research brief accomplishes such by (a) reviewing previous studies on teacher bullying; (b) identifying associated outcomes of peer bullying; (c) making connections between student-teacher interaction and the effects of bullying; (d) detailing the relevance of racially-disparate classrooms and racism; and (e) reporting findings from qualitative data of teacher-imposed teasing, bullying, and abuse collected from among randomly selected, Black American college students. Recommendations for action to address teacher bullying are also provided.

## TEACHER BULLYING

Though the literature is limited, the existence of teacher bullying is documented. Twemlow et al. (2006) conducted a study among teachers, and of the participants, 45% admitted to bullying students. Likewise, James, Lawlor, Courtney, Flynn, Henry, and Murphy (2008), examined bullying trends at secondary schools in Ireland and found that 30% of the students indicated they had been bullied by teachers. Marraccini, Weyandt, and Rossi (2015) conducted a study among college students and found that half of the 337 student participants reported witnessing teacher-student bullying and 18% reported being bullied by their instructors. There was also a relationship between the occurrence of teacher bullying prior to college with post-secondary occurrences.

Despite the research-documented problem, teacher bullying is still largely underemphasized. Early examinations of teacher bullying, like that of Children's Legal Centre in Colchester, Britain, were often explored casually (viz. Irvine, 1997). Irvine (1997) interviewed school leaders, parents, and directors of education advocacy institutions to highlight the common problem. He stated if teacher bullying, which often takes on the

form of rudeness to children, was overtly addressed, educational leaders open schools up to more issues. He further noted that teacher bullying damages students socially, academically, and emotionally. In 2002, for example, a Canadian middle school student tried to kill himself because he was being bullied by a teacher (viz., Suit contends teacher's bullying led to suicide try, 2002). Vermeer (2005), who withdrew his own child from a school because a teacher's use of humiliation, highlighted that despite the number of teachers who do a great job to teach children, there are also teachers who "dislike children, lack the skills to deal with them, or just plain hate their jobs and shouldn't be in the field at all" (para. 7). According to Vermeer, it is often the teachers who fit into the aforementioned categories that cause extreme harm to students.

Allen (2010) examined the relationship between classroom management and teacher bullying. She determined that some teachers' bullying practices can occur in response to a child's disruption. She asserted, "when bullied, some teachers bully back" (p. 12) and that these behaviors can also result from the bullying of teachers by administrators. Allen further asserted that teacher bullying could "be compounded by teacher practice and pedagogy that does not reflect current knowledge of learner-centered environments and where students are more likely to experience skill-and-drill methods" (p. 12).

Davies (2011) conducted a study among students and found that 64% of the 332 respondents reported that a teacher had bullied them at least once and identified that current school policies are devoid of commentary on teacher bullying. Zerillo and Osterman (2011) conducted a mixed-methods study on teacher perceptions of teacher bullying and found that teachers acknowledged awareness of perpetual teacher bullying by other teachers in their schools. However, they placed greater significance on peer-to-peer physical bullying outcomes and accountability among student bullies than socio-emotional bullying or on the behavior of their colleagues.

Chappell, Casey, Cruz, and Farrell (2004) explored teacher bullying among 1,025 college students and revealed that 12.8% of the participants observed teacher bullying. The researchers asserted that teacher bullying is a fairly common occurrence among college students, and they urged that greater attention is placed on this subject. Even among medical students in Saudi Arabia, 28% of the 542 medical students survey reported bullying from their teachers (Alzahrani, 2012). Among a group of first-year college students, bullying

was associated with lower (a) mental health functioning and (b) self-perceptions of physical and mental health (Holt, Green, Reid, DiMeo, Espelaage, & Felix, 2013). Marraccini et al.'s (2015) examination of teacher bullying among college students revealed that college students do not know how to deal with the teacher behaviors. Thus, the researchers suggested that university leaders initiate teacher bullying prevention methods.

## OUTCOMES OF BULLYING

### Academic Outcomes

The impacts of bullying are most often associated with the peer-to-peer experience. Juvonen, Wang, and Espinoza (2010) studied bullying and academic achievement among middle school students and asserted that academic achievement (i.e., grade point averages) and teachers' views of students' academic engagement were each predicted by students' self-perceptions of bully victimization and peer reported incidents of bullying. Strøm, Thoresen, Wentzel-Larsen, and Dyb (2012) investigated academic achievement among 7,343 adolescents between the ages of 15 and 16 and found that on the individual level, significant correlations among all combinations of violence, sexual abuse categories, and lower grades. Act of violence included bullying, but with teacher support as an intervention, better grades resulted. At the school level, the analysis showed even stronger correlations between poor academic performance and high levels of bullying; ultimately, students enrolled in schools with higher incidents of bullying performed worse academically. Strøm, et al.'s (2012) findings emphasize the negative impact of bullying, and the positive impact of supportive teachers. While no conclusion was drawn with this specific study, the outcomes draw a logical implication for the significant negative impacts of teacher bullying. Cornell, Gregory, Huang, and Fan (2013) studied 276 high schools in Virginia and found correlations between predictive values of student and teacher perceptions of teasing and bullying and the predictive values for other commonly-recognized factors of dropout rates. Cornell et al. (2013) suggested that the climate of teasing and bullying contributes to some students' decisions to drop out of school. Kowalski and Limber (2013) conduct a correlational study among students in grades 6 through 12 and found that participants in the bully/victim groups had the most negative psychological health, physical health, and academic performance scores.

### Bully Victimization and Long-Term Outcomes

The effects of being bullied are long-lasting and included poor academic performance, violence, poor health, and an evaluated chance of psychiatric outcomes through

adulthood (Bender & Losel, 2011; Farrington & Tfofi, 2011; Holt, Green, Reid, DiMeo, Espelage, & Felix, 2013; Wolke, Copeland, & Angold, 2013). Copeland, Wolke, and Angold (2013) conducted a study among 1420 participants who had been bullied (i.e., victims) and among victims of bullying who repeated the action (i.e., victim/bullies). Victims and victim/bullies had elevated occurrences of psychiatric outcomes. According to Copeland et al., (2019), psychiatric outcomes of bullying include antisocial personality disorder, anxiety, depression, substance use disorders, and suicidality. Wolke, Copeland, and Angold (2013) examined bully victimization outcomes among children 9 to 13 years old and determined that victims of childhood bullying, including victim/bullies, were at increased risk of poor health, poverty, and negative social-relationship outcomes in adulthood, even after the researchers controlled for childhood family hardship and childhood psychiatric disorders.

Twemlow et al. (2006) linked the long-term effects of bullying victimization as a student with bullying as an adult. While the outcomes of bully victimization vary, none are positive. The bulk of the research on bully victimization dealt with peer-to-peer bullying. To understand the extent of teacher bullying, it is essential to assess the importance of student-teacher interaction on student outcomes and behaviors.

### Effects of Teacher Bullying

Beyond its existence, the effects of teacher bullying on the students are psychological, socio-emotional, behavioral, developmental, and long term. Pottinger and Stair (2009), for example, conducted a study on the impact of students' psychological well-being and found that teacher bullying was associated with oppositional behavior, depression, and loss of trust in others among students. Monsvold, Bendixen, Hagen, and Helvick (2011) conducted a study among 116 adults and found that teacher bullying contributed to the development and persistence of those disorders into adulthood. Sharpe (2011) investigated (a) teacher abuse, (b) types of abusive behavior, (c) characteristics of teachers who abuse, (d) the reasons for abuse, and (d) the impact of victims and witness among students in Ontario and found consistent varied levels of persistent teacher abuse with socioemotional and cognitive impacts.

Inman (2019) examined teacher behaviors to include those that can be classified as teacher bullying. She explored student-teacher relationships and determined that teacher caring, as the antithesis of teacher bullying, promoted increased student engagement levels, and decreased student misbehavior.

## CONNECTIONS BETWEEN STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTION AND THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING

The relationship between teacher interaction and student achievement has been thoroughly documented (Englehart, 2009; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). No in-school factor has a greater influence on student achievement than student-teacher interaction. Teachers have the most critical in-school role in impacting students' experience and achievement through direct interactions. Furthermore, teachers influence relationships among students (Osterman, 2010). Teacher-student interaction is also positively correlated with students' self-concept (Hargrave, Tyler, Thompson, & Danner, 2016; Lockwood & McCaffrey, 2009; Stronge, Ward, Tucker, Hindman, 2007).

Since teacher-student interaction is widely perceived as the single most important in-school factor of student achievement and a student's positive relationship with learning, teacher bullying weighs even more significantly on a students' development and achievement than peer bullying. McEvoy (2005) asserted that teacher bullying can cause students to experience anger, confusion, fear, self-doubt, and weaknesses in their academic and social abilities.

### Racially-Disparate Classrooms and Racism

The White female teacher featured in the introduction scenario did not openly posit that she was bullying the student because she was Black. However, critical race theorists contend that differential treatment based on race is constructed and perpetuated by people (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010), and since racism exists in society, it exists in America's schools (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

For Black American students, whose achievement and abilities are often examined with a deficit perspective, being under the instruction of a White teacher, devoid of any other factor, can itself pose difficulties. Ample research suggests that students benefit personally and academically when they have a teacher of the same race (Downer, Goble, Meyers, & Pianta, 2016; Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016; Grissom, Rodriguez, & Kern, 2017; Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Milner, 2006; Wright, Gottfried, & Le, 2017). Attempting to learn under the direction of a negligent, abusive teacher of any race would negatively impact many students. For Black American students, in particular, teacher bullying by White teachers creates a duality of negative outcomes. Racism and students' perceptions of racist behaviors negatively impact student achievement. Black American

students are conscious of their race. They are also aware that racism exists. According to Ruck and Wortley (2002), Black American students are more prone to perceive discrimination with respect to teacher treatment, school suspension, use of police by school authorities, and police treatment at school than are White students. Perceived discrimination among Black American students could result from actual racism, and with the number of racially-disparate classrooms in America, the reality of such is substantial. While Black Americans make up 15% of the nation's student population, 80% of America's teachers are White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Singleton and Linton (2006) asserted, "We believe that race—and thus racism, in both individual and institutional forms, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged—plays a primary role in students' struggle to achieve at high levels" (p. 2).

For Black American students, racial congruence in the classroom results in the increase in math (Bates & Glick, 2013) and reading scores (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015), as well as a decrease in suspensions (Lindsay & Hart, 2017). Downey and Pribesh (2004) conducted a study on teachers' behavior among racially-congruent and racially-disparate (i.e., teacher-student matching) classrooms and found significant distinctions in how Black and White teachers perceive Black students, their behaviors, and their trajectory toward college. Teachers' perceptions and inherent ideas about race impacted their view of student behaviors (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). And while it is logical that teacher bullying occurs intra-racially and among racially-congruent classrooms, being bullied by a teacher of a different race magnified the experience for Black American college students.

## METHOD

The thirteen participants in this study included eight women and five men. All the participants were full-time Florida college or university students who attended K-12 schools in the United States.

To supplement the literature and examine Black American student experiences with teacher bullying, I used a qualitative research approach. I selected a purposive sampling. The sampling procedure complies with Creswell and Poth's (2017) recommendation for qualitative research. Each participant self-identified as Black American. Participant characteristics are presented in Table 1.

## INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

I initially contacted each participant by phone for consideration in the interview. Interviews occurred

**TABLE 1: PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS**

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	College/ University	Age
Angela	Woman	Keiser University	20
Beverly	Woman	Florida State University at Jax	19
Cheryl	Woman	Florida State University at Jax	20
Delvin	Man	Florida A&M University	24
Everett	Man	Florida A&M University	22
Freda	Woman	Florida A&M University	21
Gilbert	Man	Florida State College	21
Harriet	Woman	University of North Florida	19
Iana	Woman	University of North Florida	20
Jasmine	Woman	Florida State University	20
Kimberly	Woman	St. Petersburg College	20
Lance	Man	Bethune Cookman University	21
Michael	Man	Bethune Cookman University	20

from April 2019 to July 2019. I chose to use a semi-structured in-depth interview to prompt discussion about participants' experiences with teacher bullying from childhood to adolescence. The questions were derived from the review of literature on teacher bullying, bullying outcomes, teacher-student interaction, and racially-disparate classrooms. The questions were focused on helping students detail their experiences with teacher bullying and the racial demographics of schools. Participants were interviewed using an open-ended interview schedule of questions. Three research questions guided this study:

1. How do Black American students perceive their experiences with teacher bullying?
2. Is there a difference between the regularity of teacher bullying between racially-disparate and racially-congruent classrooms?
3. What impact does teacher bullying have of Black American students?

Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and coded. The qualitative data were analyzed and themes emerged from the transcripts.

### Role of Researcher

With qualitative discovery, the researcher is often the most important instrument for data collection. Thus, the potential for researcher bias may affect the credibility of the data provided by the participants. Articulation of reflexivity involves examining how the researcher's background may shape the study. My experiences as an alumnus of two of the universities did not affect interpretations of the findings. Likewise, sharing ethnic/racial group membership with the participants had no influence on coding or interpretation of the data. My experiences from childhood to adolescence were not included, and my role is ultimately etic.

### Data Analysis

Using constant comparative method, which involves a combination of induction and categorization to compare qualitative data (Mathison, 2005), I analyzed the participant's experiences. Constant comparative method was developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1965 and is associated with the grounded theory (Mathison, 2005).

I used a multi-step data analysis process. First, I listened to recordings and summarized each. Second, each interview recording was transcribed. Third, I developed a list of codes; the codes were based on common responses and existing literature. Themes were then generated, and the interview transcripts were coded. To increase the credibility of the findings, an external researcher analyzed the data, and peer debriefing was also used.

## FINDINGS

Analysis of the data revealed three themes that characterized the teacher-bullying experiences of the participants in this study: (a) Early Victimization; (b) Unforgettable, Unchecked Actions; and (c) It is a Socio-ethnic Matter. These themes coincide with the study's research questions. One related concept—Laughter Can Hurt—is reflected throughout. Themes and the related concept are supported by extractions of collected data.

### Early Victimization

Based on participant responses, the first theme that emerged involves teacher bullying is early school years. While teacher bullying behaviors were discussed and acknowledged among varied levels of education, participants' responses emphasized teacher bullying

among elementary years (i.e., pre-kindergarten through sixth grade). Specific participant responses to illustrate the Early Victimization theme follow. Everett said,

*In elementary school, some of these teachers just shouldn't have been teacher. It wasn't just mean; it was nasty and sometimes cruel. I had a teacher named Ms. (intentionally omitted). Just nasty. None of the children liked her because she would call us names and yell in our faces. One time, I'll never forget, I was sitting on the floor, and she told me to get up. She actually used her foot under my leg, and it hurt. She was evil.*

And Harriet shared her elementary-aged experience and emphasized the pain associated with being laughed at by her peers,

*I had a hard time in grade school (i.e., elementary). In third grade, my teacher hated me. She always looked at me like she couldn't stand me, and no matter what I asked, she always said no. I remember I asked to go to the bathroom. She immediately said no. Another kid asked right after me, and she said yes. Everyone laughed, and she said nothing.*

To convey her elementary-aged teacher bullying experiences, Kimberly stated,

*For most of elementary I hated school. I hate school because I hated feeling like I didn't matter and that I was stupid. I had teachers who actually said, 'You are a stupid little girl.' Another one said, "It's a good thing you look okay because you aren't very smart are you."*

When asked why they thought bullying occurred more at the early level, participants suggested that young children make easier victims, and their resistance is less threatening. Everett said, "Those types of teachers are weak. They aren't going to bother high school kids like that because they know they are going to go right off on them. They aren't going to take that." Likewise, Harriet shared, "Think about it. The type of person who will treat kids like that would look for an easy target. Young kids are easy targets."

### Unforgettable, Unchecked Actions

A second theme that emerged about teacher bullying centered around the surreptitiousness of what some would consider bullying but its long-term effects on the participants. Most participants who discussed incidents that they felt were bullying indicated that they would not forget how the experiences made them feel. Participant extractions that convey the theme Unforgettable, Unchecked Actions follow. Michael shared his unforgettable teacher bullying experience and said, "I

remember a teacher told me I was destined to go to prison. She said that prison was for me, and I remember her laughing. I was only about 11. What she said wasn't as bad as how she said it, as if she enjoyed the idea of me going to prison." While Harriet conveyed pain associated with being laughed at by her peers, Michael's experience amplified his teacher laughing at him. Sharing her pain, Iana stated, "Asking a kid if she is stupid is crazy to me. What kind of teacher does that? They should make us feel able to do anything, not try to make us feel that we are nothing. I never forgot her saying that to me. I never forgot how I felt when she did."

Sharing his unforgettable experience with a 'bad teacher,' Gilbert said,

*Man, I had this elementary teacher who thought it was her job to treat us like crap. She would get in our faces and tell us to shut up. She would call us idiots and grab us by our arms. One time, I asked her. I said, 'Why you talk to us so rude like you hate us? If you hate us, you should get a job somewhere else.' She got so mad; she left out of the classroom. She slammed the door, and all the kids laughed. Nobody forgets bad teachers like that. We remember the good ones and the bad ones.*

When asked if they told anyone about such incidents of teacher bullying, most participants conveyed a distrust of administration and even their parents to address the incidents. Others suggested that there was no use because at the time they thought adults believed other adults. Michael shared, "My mom wasn't around, and my gram tend[ed] to believe whatever the teacher said. I didn't trust the principal either. I didn't have anyone to tell." Having a similar experience, Iana said, "They [adults] never believed me, so I figured there was nothing I could do about it. Besides, it started to feel normal. Now, I know it's not, but then I didn't know."

Gilbert asserted, "It wouldn't have done any good to say anything, and I didn't." Thus, according to the participants, the teachers' behaviors persisted and remained furtive from other adults.

### **It is a Socio-ethnic Matter**

A third theme that emerged from participants' responses is It is a Socio-ethnic Matter. The participants commented that teachers who demonstrated teacher bullying behavior gave the impression that their behaviors were related to socioeconomics, ethnic group membership, and race. More specifically, participants suggested that teachers seemed to look down on students who came from certain neighborhoods, and in incidents of racial incongruence, many White teachers seemed to look down on Black students. Specific participant extractions

that convey the theme follow. Delvin said, "I had Black teachers who were mean, but they wanted us to do good. A lot of the White teachers I had would say 'you people' and say things like 'you don't have many options living on this side of town.' They had obvious issues with us."

Likewise, Harriet shared her own experience that included her teacher laughing at her; she stated,

*I didn't live in a bad hood. Both of my parents had good jobs, but because of the school I went to, I guess some of the teachers thought we was all poor. Once, this White teacher told me, 'If you don't make better choices, you might end on being a crackhead on the street. Would you like that?' Then, that heifer laughed at me. I guess she didn't realize some Black people have good jobs. My mom is a nurse.*

Emphasizing ethnic and socioeconomic factors, Angela said,

*It's not fun when teachers believe we don't matter because we're Black and aren't rich. I had too many White teachers who acted like they were better. My third-grade teacher used to always yell at us and tell us we were thugs. Then, she would say, 'I mean you are acting like thugs.' What eight-year-old acts like a thug? Then, she would say things like, 'You must like living over here in this filth. Maybe that is what you are--filth.'"*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were derived from (a) the examination of synthesized literature pertaining to teacher bullying and (b) the data collected among Black American college student participants. School and district leader recommendations provide action items for wide-spread teacher anti-bully initiatives to improve schools. Recommendations for teachers are also included and emphasize teacher emotional well-being and cultural responsiveness, as well as shared control in the classroom.

### **Recommendations for School and District Leaders**

To reduce the occurrences of and outcomes associated with teacher bullying, the roles of school and district leaders are essential. As school and district leaders, these administrators are responsible for setting standards, policies, practices, and even penalties for acts and behaviors that negatively impact student achievement, well-being, and relationship with learning. The following recommendations are important for school and district leaders:

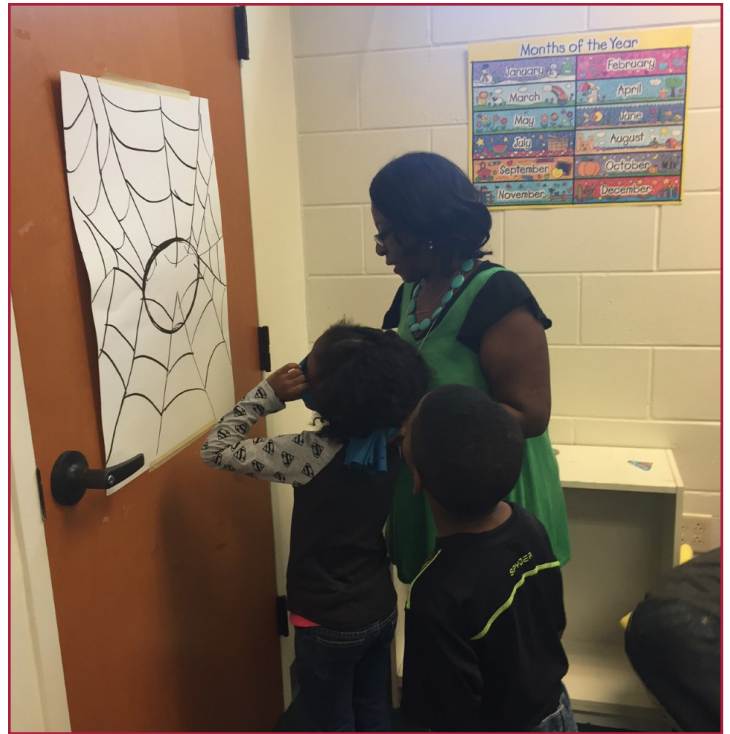
1. Acknowledge that teacher bullying exists and is a problem.

2. Establish a no-tolerance teacher bullying policy and share this policy with all teacher and teacher-support personnel applicants. Define, provide examples, and re-emphasize the severity of teacher bullying during all teacher and teacher-support personnel interviews.
3. Implement district and school-wide policies and procedures for reporting teacher bullying. Clear teacher penalties should be made evident and fair, based on the degree of the offense.
4. Monitor in-school behaviors and take seriously any report of teacher bullying.
5. Educate teachers, teacher support personnel, school staff, parents, and students on what is and is not considered teacher bullying.
6. Make every effort to consider teacher preference when making school assignments. Teacher job satisfaction is an important element of teacher practice.
7. Provide students with a penalty-free environment to communicate their concerns. Student consequences for false allegations should be made clear.
8. Engage school psychologists and mental health counselors in developing a therapeutic treatment for students who have been victimized by teacher bullying.

### Recommendations for Teachers

While some teacher bullying behavior is overt and conscious, it is possible that some teachers are not aware of how their behaviors, comments, and use of power have a negative impact on students. As previously noted, teacher-student interaction is the most important in-school factor on student achievement. Therefore, teachers have an essential role in addressing incidents of teacher bullying. The following recommendations are made to all teachers:

1. Be real with yourself. Take a personal inventory of your personal biases and consider those before teacher placement. Students are not deceived, and no matter how intentional in your efforts, personal biases eventually reveal themselves and will cost you and affect students.
2. Educate yourself on the impact of teacher bullying.
3. Connect yourself to a community of teachers to offer you support and encouragement.
4. Do not place yourself in a school community or accept a teacher assignment in a school that you do not feel a sense of social and emotional investment and whose students you are unwilling to advocate for. If you have a negative perception of Black American students, for example, identify a school that serves a different population of students.



5. Identify a teacher teammate and request adjoining classrooms (if possible). Ask for help when you need it.
6. Anticipate and practice reactions to student stimuli. Negative student behaviors are a part of the job, but teachers have to hold themselves to a higher degree of self-discipline and self-regulation.
7. Consider when your own disposition is too impacted to engage positively with students. Personal days are factored into most teacher contracts.
8. Allow yourself breaks to refresh and be a better servant to your student population.
9. Share power with your students in the classroom; distribute responsibilities; and allow students the opportunity to voice their frustrations, concerns, ideas, and even fears.
10. Do not yell in your classroom and make certain words, phrases, or comments unacceptable for yourself and your students. In doing so, it is likely that you can maintain positive student-teacher interaction, so students feel comfortable, supported, safe, and empowered.

While these recommendations will not eliminate teacher bullying, they will allow for increased awareness of the negative practices and a probable decrease in the occurrences of such behaviors.

## CONCLUSION

Teacher bullying is an abuse of power that (a) is stressful for the student and negatively impacts the student's perceived self-efficacy and engagement; (b) molests



cognitive development; (c) thwarts real accountability for both the teacher and the student; (d) demonstrates no emotional intelligence on the part of the teacher; (e) weakens the teacher-student relationship and the teacher's influence, which is one of the most important qualities of student achievement; (f) models bullying as an acceptable behavior among students; and (g) could provoke long-lasting outcomes into students' adulthood. Moreover, yelling at, laughing at the expense of, and demeaning students are the antithesis of learning, nor does it correct any confusion students may have with the content or any gaps in the teacher's instruction, no matter the race of the student or teacher. Furthermore, considering race and cultural relevancy and the declining presence of racially-congruent classrooms for Black American students, the racial difference combined with acts of teacher bullying provide a critically ignored interruption of Black student development and achievement.

As a former middle school teacher, I do understand the demands associated with teaching, but there are stressors with all careers. As a researcher and educator, I recognize that we cannot excuse behaviors, particularly behaviors of the educators, that mitigate student achievement, experience, and their mental health and self-efficacy. School and district-level leaders aim to hold students responsible for their behaviors, and among Black students, the disbursement of punishment is wider. Therefore, it is imperative that we hold all teachers accountable for more than just test scores.

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