RETHINKING Behavior

SPRING 2018
VOLUME 1
ISSUE 3

A magazine for professionals serving children and youth with behavioral needs.

MSL BD

Midwest Symposium for Leadership in Behavior Disorders

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OCTOBER 4 & 5, 2018

Edwards Campus • University of Kansas, Overland Park

This conference will honor our friend and colleague who has been a leader in working with children and youth with autism.

Open to all educators who serve children and youth with autism. Sessions and speakers will focus on improved understanding of evidence based practices in school contexts for serving students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Keynote Speakers • Workshops • Half Day Workshops

Breakout Sessions!

Breakout Sessions with topics –
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ABA and discrete trial teaching in school settings: Sonja de Boer
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Paraprofessional training, management, and support: Jessica Nelson
Play-based instruction: Teri McGill
Employment training for transition-aged youth with ASD: Leslie Bross
Assessment & evaluation for instructional programming: Lee Stickle & Brooke Carlson-Young
Skillstreaming for Youth with Autism: Ellen McGinnis-Smith
Early childhood peer-mediated interventions: Jose Martinez
Social Thinking: Teresa Kemper and Theresa Earles-Vollrath

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Keynote Speakers

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Matt & Brenda McNiff
Brenda Smith Myles

Workshops

Full Day Workshop
Verbal Behavior for Teachers:
Mary Beth Patry & Stacey Martin

A Special TASN Workshop
for administrators of school programs forlearners with autism.

Half Day Workshops and Topics:

Titles to be announced!

Rural Special Education:
Rob Pennington

Sexuality Education:
Jason Travers

Video-based instruction:
Paul LaCava

Functional Behavior Assessment:
Kaye Otten

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Self-Management:
Stephen Crutchfield

Visual Supports:
Teresa Kemper and Theresa Earles-Vollrath

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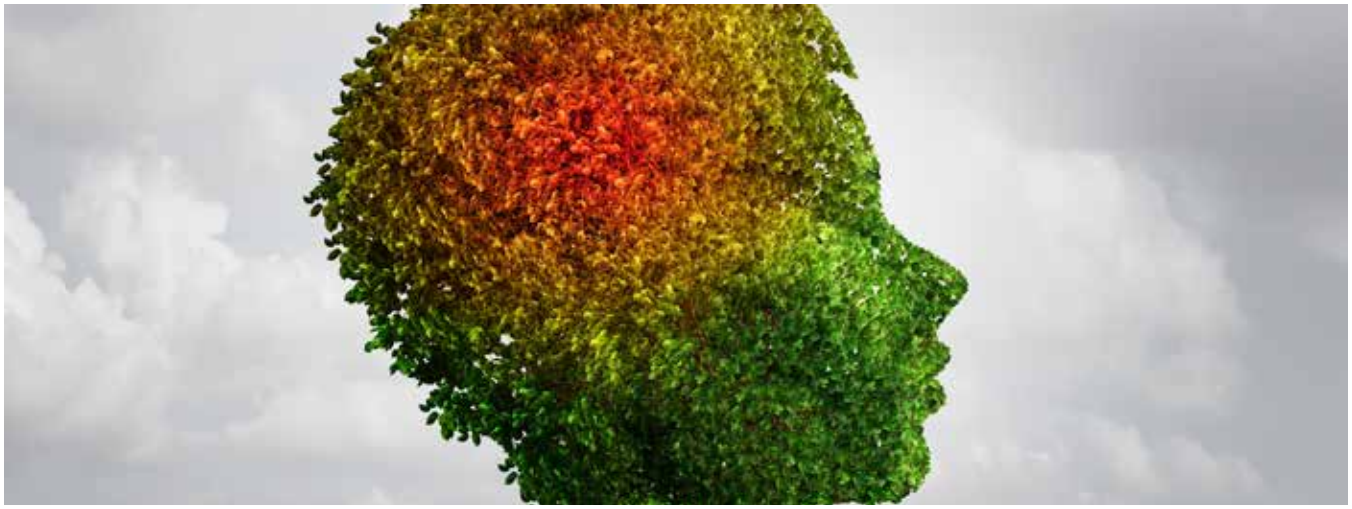
Focusing on Mental Health and Violence in Our Schools

As a result of recent events there is a nationwide conversation about mental health and violence that is taking place within our schools. In this issue of *REThinking Behavior* we touch on some of these conversations. Although recent violence in Parkland, Florida and Lexington Park, Maryland are on our minds, most of the content of this issue was not created in the wake of these events, but was created before these events. These themes are ongoing within our schools and communities.

This issue of *REThinking Behavior* is not comprehensive enough to address all of the conversations and topics that surround the needs of our schools, but our goal for this issue is to give you, our readers, ideas to foster discussion related to the crisis that we are seeing. We made a commitment at *REThinking Behavior* to represent diverse viewpoints and we welcome any submissions for future issues that may address different ideas or approaches. In addition, we welcome comments from our readership through direct submission to the magazine at rethinkingbehavior@mslbd.org. No matter what viewpoint you may have on these issues, discussion and action is needed within our homes, schools, communities, and organizations to be sure that we are addressing our students' needs and giving them opportunities for support and effective education.

We invite our readers to inform themselves about current policies and action within their own communities. Throughout the past weeks we have seen through marches and advocacy the impact that the education community can have on change. Keep up the strong advocacy and work that we are doing as a field to support our students and their families. If you haven't already done so, begin the discussion and get involved.

The Editorial Team



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Don't Wait Until It Happens to You:

A Teacher's Story of Gun Violence

By Jarren Peterson

My childhood was picture perfect. Mom, dad, older brother, and two dogs. My parents actually still live in my childhood home. Growing up, I certainly never thought about gun violence. I never had to. Yet here I am, telling my story as a survivor of gun violence.

My late boyfriend, James Cole, and I were opposites in many ways. He grew up on the Southside of Chicago. James was strong, steady, and predictable. He was also extremely shy. My mom said it took him six months to speak a whole sentence to her. James was completely devoted to his family and he took care of everyone. His mom and four sisters relied on him when they needed help. His two younger brothers looked up to him. He was the rock of their family. He always followed through on his word. James loved playing basketball, video games, and making music with his friends. He was still searching for a career path in life, but even at the age of 23, James dreamed of being a dad.

Unfortunately, James never had the chance to become a father. On a Sunday evening in November 2014, James went out with his friends in my car. He never came home. By 1:00 am, his family and I were frantic. We heard news that there had been a shooting about a mile from where

we live. The police couldn't provide us any details about the shooting. We drove to the hospital downtown in hopes of finding him. When we walked into the emergency room, I distinctly remember an infomercial on TV. The announcer said, "Today will be the day that will change the rest of your life." And right there in that moment, I knew it was true.

We drove around to area hospitals for a couple more hours and continued to be told that James had not been admitted as a patient. Around 3:00 a.m. James's mom was advised by a hospital security guard to call the county morgue. James had been there since 10:30 pm. He was never admitted to a hospital because he was dead when the police arrived at the scene. Nobody called to inform us that James died. Nobody answered his phone, which was ringing off the hook. Nobody came to our house, even though the car was registered to me. I was learning that what we see on television crime shows isn't at all what happens in real life. Imagine a mother finding out about her son's death by identifying his dead body over the phone.

Without knowing why James was murdered, it was almost impossible to grieve his loss. Who was responsible? Why? Were we in danger? Months went by before we finally got answers. James ran into an acquaintance that November night. The man asked James for a ride home. James agreed. The man asked James to stop at a friend's house on the way. What James didn't know was that his acquaintance had robbed that very house a week before. When the people inside saw that man coming, they came out shooting. James was shot in the head and neck with a sawed-off shotgun. A witness reported that James's last words were, "I want to go home."

The infomercial I heard in the emergency room that night was exactly right. Losing James to gun violence *did* completely change the rest of my life. The safety and security I had taken for granted my entire life was stripped from of me the split second that trigger was pulled. Three years later, I still suffer from the repercussions of this tragic, senseless crime. I have been diagnosed with PTSD. You can't tell just by looking at me, but the aftermath of gun violence follows me like a shadow, and haunts me at the most unexpected times and places. There is no escape. This is my new reality.

The aftermath of gun violence follows me like a shadow, and haunts me at the most unexpected times and places. There is no escape. This is my new reality.

But this is only half of my story. Yes, I am a survivor of gun violence, but I am also a high school special education teacher. Both of my parents are educators, and growing up, I saw the way they impacted young peoples' lives on a daily basis. I always wanted to be just like them. I used to play school with all of my stuffed animals. This job has been my dream since I was a child. I went straight from college into graduate school to get my master's degree in special education. It was my turn to work with young people. While I always thought I'd want to teach elementary students, my first job was at a high school. I fell in love with the older students. I have worked with high school students for 11 years.

But when there is news of yet another school shooting, the shadow of gun violence that is constantly right behind me grows larger, ready to take over. Every single day, I walk through the halls of a large high school. Every single day, I am confronted by things that trigger my PTSD from unexpected loud noises to lock downs that aren't

drills. Every single day, I force myself to put my personal trauma in the back of my mind so that I can truly focus on the amazing, challenging, vulnerable, deserving kids in front of me. And it's not easy.

But I get the privilege of being with these incredible young adults every day and they deserve me at my best. Every single day, I hope that my students will never, ever have to experience the unrelenting path of destruction that gun violence leaves in its wake. Sadly, I know that many of my students have experienced the trauma of gun violence and most aren't able to process the immense grief that comes along with it.

But we don't have to live like this. I will repeat that. We don't have to live like this! We, as educators, don't have to question our dreams of becoming teachers because we don't know how we'd respond to someone coming into our building and spraying bullets. We, as students, don't have to accept that our safety and security is in jeopardy every time we walk through the doors of our school. We, as parents, don't have to accept that someone's unlimited second amendment right to own a gun is more important than our child's right to live. We, as a community, don't have to accept that our elected officials will do what they do, not with our best interest in mind, but rather the campaign donations they will get from voting a certain way. We, as a country, do not have to accept that senseless gun violence is a part of our culture. We don't have to live like this.

Every time there's news of another school shooting, I'm devastated, disheartened, disgusted, and frankly, I'm scared. But my fear should not be mistaken for weakness, because more than anything, I'm ready. And I know I'm not alone. I suspect a lot of us are ready. Ready for change. We don't have to live like this, and we are ready to fight for common sense gun laws to keep our children safe; to keep them alive.

Gun violence plagues our country. In the United States, one person is killed by a firearm every 17 minutes, an average of 96 people per day. Seven American children or teens are shot and killed every day. In the first three months of 2018 there have been more than 30 school shootings in our country (Note 1). We have created a society that uses guns to solve problems. But senseless gun violence *is* the problem. This does not have to be our reality.

If you believe that this fight for common sense gun laws is a fight we can't win, you're wrong. If you tell yourself that gun violence won't happen to you, I used to tell myself that too. If you have convinced yourself that you don't know anyone affected by gun violence, you will soon.

So, it's time for action. The purpose is not about politics, the gun debate or choosing a side – it's

about ending gun violence and saving lives. It's about honoring the 17 innocent people who were robbed of their lives in Parkland, Florida. It's about the 96 people who will be shot and killed today. It's about all of the lives being taken from senseless gun violence. It's about James.

The first action step is simple. Join *Moms Demand Action*. Take out your phones and text the word HONOR to 644-33 to get involved. Join, attend, advocate, educate, donate, host, and vote. We value any type of support you're capable of giving to the gun violence prevention movement. Please don't wait until it's too late. Don't wait until it happens to you.

Note 1 - All statistics used were collected from research done by *Everytown For Gun Safety*, www.everytownresearch.org

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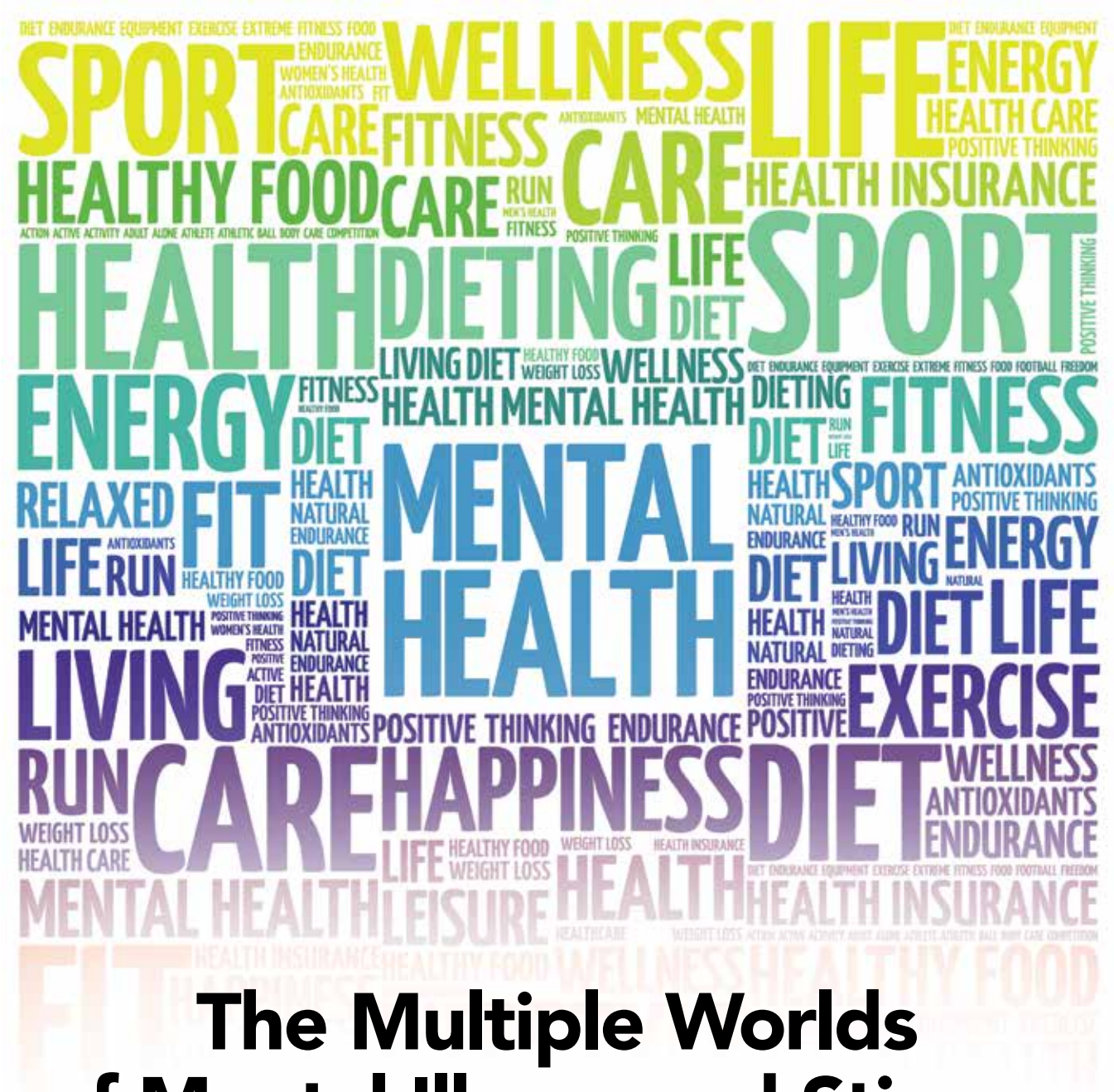
Jarren Peterson, high school teacher of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, MN, jarrenpeterson@hotmail.com. A more complete version of this story can be found at: https://momsdemandaction.org/take-it-from-me-gun-violence-can-happen-to-anyone/

MOMS DEMAND ACTION FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America (https://momsdemandaction.org/) was created to demand action from legislators, state and federal, companies, and educational institutions to establish common-sense gun reforms. It was founded by stay-at-home mom Shannon Watts on December 15, 2012 in response to the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. It has chapters in all 50 states, and envisions a country where all children and families are safe from gun violence by educating, motivating, and mobilizing supports to take action.



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The Multiple Worlds of Mental Illness and Stigma: Is it us? Is it them? Or is it both?

By Carl R. Smith

In 1972, I began my Ph.D. program at the University of Iowa. I was a *newbie* to Iowa and intended to complete my program in 3 to 4 years and then start my career in behavioral disorders in a somewhat warmer climate. I soon encountered these perspectives.

- Thomas Szasz argued that mental illness is a myth and criticized the moral and scientific foundations of psychiatry. He argued that mental illness was just normal problems in living, not "illness" and that "madness" was manufactured (Szasz, 1961).
- Erving Goffman, a sociologist, documented the regimented and carefully controlled existence of those who were unfortunate enough to be identified as a person with mental illness in psychiatric institutions in his book *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961).
- D.L. Rosennhan questioned whether experts in mental health could truly distinguish between patients needing care in mental health settings from others who he called "pseudopatients," people who represented themselves as mentally ill but who were actually normal people (1973).
- Bill Rhodes posed the question whether the students served as emotionally disturbed in special education were actually better described as emotionally disturbing to others (1963). Various theorists, labeled as counter-theorists, carried this banner forward. Rhodes went on to champion the notion of "celebrate deviance" asserting that our society would be in significant danger if deviance were eliminated.

These seemingly incompatible perspectives presented a challenge for me. On the one hand, mental illness was a creation of our society as a means of coping with behavior that others perceived as unacceptable. On the other hand the behaviors noted above seemed to fall out of the range of normal behavior.

My road towards understanding these challenging thinkers and developing a career in special education then took a sudden and dramatic turn. As I remember, I started having significant problems with sleep. I also began having significant problems in my thought and interpretive competencies. Along with this I became much more assertive in my advocacy work on behalf of the students I worked with and became suspicious that I would suffer consequences from faculty because of such advocacy. Realizing the dangers of such thinking I began to understand that I probably would benefit from some type of mental health help.

My mental illness experience was a secret to hide most of my adult life.

But I also saw what had happened on the national scene when Thomas Eagleton, Senator from Missouri had been chosen in 1972 as George McGovern's running mate but was later removed from this opportunity because of his mental health treatment. For me this signaled the unacceptability of receiving any type of mental health treatment as that would likely plague me for my entire life and thus I did not seek such help. I also did not accept help from a good friend to have me meet with the admitting physician at the University Psychiatric Hospital.

This strategy did not work well for me, as I nevertheless ended up being hospitalized for most of the Spring of 1973. When finally admitted, I was diagnosed with various conditions ranging across

primary affective disorder, acute atypical psychosis, acute schizophrenia-form psychosis, paranoid state in remission, and reactive agitated depression in remission. Thus, I went from being a promising, up and coming doctoral student to a psychiatric patient with several of the identified conditions described in DSM II (the current version at the time). I was –

- A patient who thought he was being constantly observed even by the television.
- A patient who thought another patient was actually his doctor.
- A patient looking totally drained after being locked in a time-out room for eight hours, which apparently had followed the patient being restrained.
- A patient who could not sit still and had to continually walk.
- A patient who was so medicated that he drooled and could barely stay awake.

During that time I was prescribed the most commonly used interventions of medications for addressing psychotic behavior, Thorazine, described by some as "a chemical lobotomy" and Stelazine. While these medications were hailed as significant strides in the practices of psychiatry from earlier methods of prefrontal lobotomies there were side effects to cope with. As a side effect of these drugs I became almost robotic in my movements. As a result I was also given Artane to offset these side effects of the first two.

At other times, I became noncompliant and aggressive; behaviors that were not typical for me. In dealing with this, the hospital staff restrained and secluded me in what was named the quiet room for up to eight hours at a time as a primary intervention. The only interaction with others during this extended time-out were the nurses bringing in my medications.

In viewing the impact of this experience in my life since, I have several thoughts. First, my mental illness

I went from being a promising, up and coming doctoral student to a psychiatric patient with several conditions described in the DSM II . .

experience was a secret to hide most of my adult life. And there is certainly a foundation for doing so. A close friend advised me to *not* share my story. She was particularly concerned that this sharing would lead to adverse effects on my chances of advancing professionally. Fortunately, this same good friend recently advised me of the value of sharing my story with others as one example of moving beyond this experience and doing well professionally.

Secondly, there were also other possible outcomes outside of the hospital that would have had a significant impact on my chances of recovery. First would have been the ending of my assistantship with the university and possibly being excluded from my program in special education. Rather than this, I received total support from the university faculty. They did so even though my behavior leading up to the hospitalization could have easily led this faculty to determine that I was a *threat* to them individually or to the program considering my paranoid thought processes leading up to my hospitalization. This could have also led to my exclusion from my intended program. Think about how this plays out with current media and the focus on the danger of violence often associated with persons with serious mental illness; an additional dynamic of mental illness and stigma.

A final thought that has emerged through my journey is that I was extraordinarily fortunate to be where I was when my serious mental illness happened. I was new to a state, only having lived in Iowa for six months. The student insurance policy

I took out only provided for less serious concerns. Despite this status, all of my hospital stay was covered by what is known as "state papers." I have tried to get the actual costs of this treatment and hospitalization but found out that county records, where these would be stored, did not extend back that far. In what was probably my first "outing experience" of sharing my mental illness I shared my experience with the Iowa Mental Health and Disabilities Commission and questioned whether such support would be consistently provided to a student in Iowa in a similar situation today. My fellow Commission members agreed to reconsider the assumption that such a student would receive the same treatment today, I believe this contributed in further considerations of reforms needed in our mental health system.

Lessons Learned

First, I think that we need to make our stories public. I hope this article contributes to the collection of stories of the many individuals who have faced mental health challenges and went on to lead productive, self-satisfying lives. At least two studies (Corrigan & O'Shaughnessy, 2007; Mann & Himelein, 2008) suggest that the stories told by persons who have experienced mental illness may have a profound effect in reducing the impact of stigma.

Secondly, think about the circumstances under which we are most frequently exposed to the lives of persons facing mental health challenges. How frequently are these diagnoses associated with highly deviant, aggressive, or destructive behaviors? As Leys (2010) points out, serious mental health conditions such as schizophrenia are commonly associated with violence and crime when in reality most individuals with this condition lead "quiet, unremarkable lives" (p. A1).

Another related dynamic is the influence of whether we believe an individual with mental illness can control their behavior. On the positive side, some of us, who believe such behavior is beyond the control for the individual, may be more forgiving. Others may be more pessimistic regarding possible recovery from these conditions if they believe the behavior is beyond the control of the individual (Corrigan et al., 2005).

We also have differing judgments of other people's behavior in contrast to our own. As Aronson (2000) states:

> . . . whenever we observe someone's negative or nasty behavior, we are prone to assume that the behavior is caused by the kind of person they are, rather than the kind of situation they are in. Interestingly, we are almost always more generous in interpreting the reasons behind our own behavior - primarily because each of us is more familiar with the situational pressures under which we are operating. (p. 22)

Contrast this perspective with the role models we need of leaders and caring individuals, particularly in these times where blaming often seems to have replaced attempts at understanding.

Photo courtesy of Maialisa at Pixabay

There are not clear defining lines separating most forms of mental illness from normal behavior. We all may experience certain behavioral manifestations in areas such as depression or anxiety that may be tolerable at certain times and at other times take us over a threshold and shut down our ability to cope and function competently. As Smoller (2012) notes, "By the latest accounting, more than half of all Americans meet criteria for a psychiatric disorder at some time in their lives" (p. 13).

It is also important to note that my journey beyond the early hospital experience has not always been smooth. There were times when I was faced with anxiety and panic attacks related to public speaking and phobias triggered by airplane travel or crossing bridges. The criteria or measure of seriousness is the ultimate challenge of whether these have a functional impact on my life. They did and through some pretty good talking cures and medication these were dealt with. I still take a small dose of antidepressant to cope with what seems to be a common malady for people of my age.

This leads to the meaning of the title I chose for this article and what I believe will be one of the most significant barriers we face in reducing stigma. Until the time that most people perceive mental illness as being a part of all of our lives and not just *them*, we will see this stigma persist. To capture the theme of *us* means that we realize that mental illness will affect all of us, particularly as we think of all the people in our extended family. As Pete Earley (2006) reminds us, we lock up the mentally ill because they frighten us and we believe there is something that caused this insanity. To believe otherwise, Earley notes would open the possibility that this could happen to us. As he contends, ". . . that is such a frightening thought that we quietly search for explanations to prove that the mentally ill really aren't like us and they somehow deserve the torment they suffer" (pp. 121-122). To truly impact the stigma of mental illness, for children, adolescents, or adults, we can and must do better. We must adopt an approach that embraces a caring and understanding world of mental illness and belief in the power of recovery.

Until the time that most people perceive mental illness as being a part of all of our lives and not just them, *we will see this stigma persist.*

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Leading in the Wake of Violence, an Interview with School Leaders

By Seth A. Piro

You and I likely share a collection of memories that we'd rather be without. These moments we share, even as strangers. While yours may be a bit different, they are still the same.

On April 20th, 1999, as a high school sophomore, I stood in a locker room 1,200 miles away from Littleton, Colorado, staring at the TV on coach's desk and seeing students run from hallways that I, unknowingly, would be walking through just four months later.

On December 14th, 2012, as a school psychologist in a room full of educators in Southwest Iowa, we were distracted from the RTI training, our focus locked on the Sandy Hook tragedy.

On February 14th, 2018, as an administrator, I was staring at a flat screen surrounded by 6,000 school psychologists at the National Association of School Psychologists convention, watching the reports come in from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL.

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School leaders across the country have and continue to work diligently to prevent adding to our tragic set of memories. In the weeks after our most recent school shooting incident I reached out to two of those administrators, both principals who have influenced my work in education. Hopefully they can shed light on where we have been, where we are, and what the future may hold as we work to create safe environments for students. Here I will share my conversations with Mrs. Christi Gochenour and Mr. Frank DeAngelis.

Mrs. Christi Gochenour has served as the 7-12 principal for Logan-Magnolia (Lo-Ma) Community Schools in Logan, Iowa since 2010. Before returning to her High School stomping grounds to serve as principal for Lo-Ma, her 17-years as a professional educator began at Alpha School in Omaha, NE. She also taught middle school in Missouri Valley, IA, served as a TAG Coordinator in Blair, NE, and worked as a Professional Development/School Improvement Coordinator for Green Hills Area Education Agency, in Southwest Iowa.

Mr. Frank DeAngelis retired in 2014 after 18 years as principal for Columbine High School. He now serves in district outreach for safety and emergency management for the Jeffco School District in Colorado, presents nationally on school safety, and assists other school leaders navigate through the fog following school shootings across the country, most recently in Marshall County High School in Benton, KY and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL.

After Violence

It is phenomenal how quickly one regresses back to their sixteen-year-old self when hearing the voice of a former principal. Picking up the phone to hear DeAngelis speak provided a heartening reminder that the impact a strong school leader has on students, staff, parents, and a community is everlasting. Before the Columbine shooting, "We did fire drills, not lockdowns and reunifications," DeAngelis reflected. Afterwards things changed drastically. Columbine redefined everything regarding school violence and our approach to school safety.

Before the Columbine shooting, "We did fire drills, not lockdowns and reunifications."

Even if you are thousands of miles away, an act of school violence puts everyone on heightened alert, caution, and fear. School leaders need to be reassuring and vigilant regarding the safety of students and staff. When supporting staff and students returning to school after an act of violence, DeAngelis stressed that the biggest thing leaders can do is to secure the safety and sense of safety of those walking back into the building. This can be accomplished through communicating clearly with families, students, and staff, making extra efforts to be visible in the halls, and providing active shooter training for staff and students, which is required by more and more states. DeAngelis says, "You have to redefine what normal is… it's part of the healing process." We see this being carried out now through increased attention to forming staff-student relationships, increased security presence, limited building access, transparent backpacks, and other attempts to make schools safer. DeAngelis also advises school leaders to be aware of the possibility of an increase in threats following violent events and to take every threat seriously.

In Logan, Iowa, 1,642 miles from Parkland, FL, Gochenour noticed that staff members were understandably shaken up after the recent shooting. Each tragedy serves as a learning opportunity for all educators and administrators across the country on the need to improve school safety. Both prin-

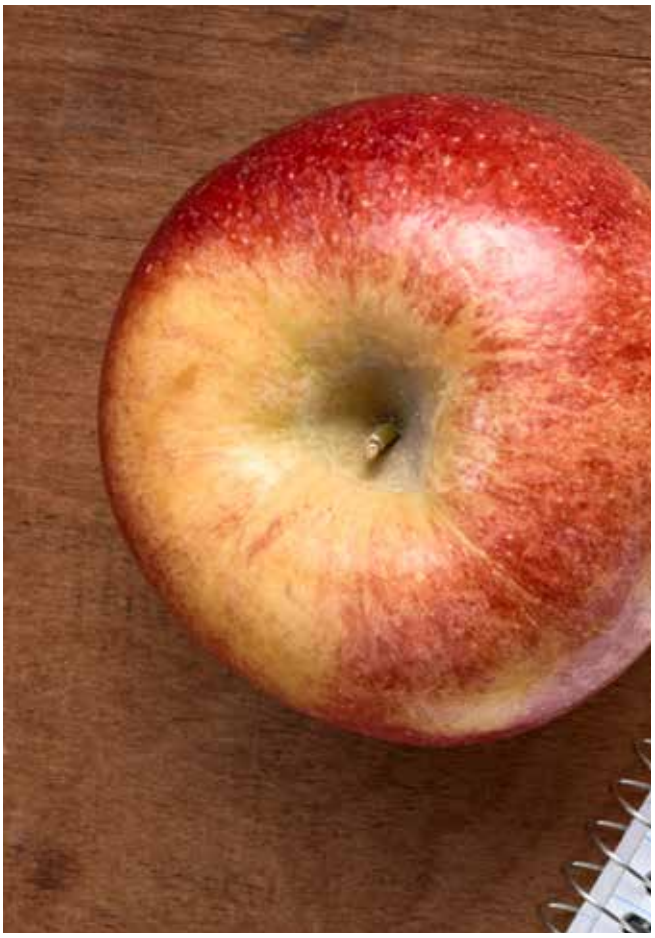
cipals stressed that while reviews of school safety plans and careful attention to safety details, like which doors don't always get shut tightly, should be routine, these practices receive increased attention after tragedy hits.

Steps Toward Safer Schools

From his experiences, DeAngelis has found that schools and communities cannot function without the active engagement and participation of all. He recommends that school leaders engage staff and students in the active role of being the eyes and ears of the school. We need to use all the tools at our disposal, especially social media, to communicate with students the need to share information with parents, teachers, administrators, and/or law enforcement when there is a concern. In Gochenour's most recent experience with school violence, engagement was essential when a former student made a threat during the back-to-school open house. Through students reporting to adults when they saw something unsafe, video review, communication with law enforcement, and contact with the individual's parent, he was arrested and the school was kept safe. Team work is vital in making and keeping a school safe.

DeAngelis highlights that there have been a lot of changes for the better regarding school safety, pointing out that, "We don't hear about the ones that have *not* happened because of the changes that have been made." DeAngelis referenced the work of John McDonald, Executive Director of Security and Emergency Management for Jeffco Schools. This work includes the adoption of a standard protocol and 24-hour tip line (www.safe-2tell.org), managing entrances to the schools, and increasing awareness across the board. Everyone is greeted upon entering the school in a manner that emphasizes safety.

At Lo-Ma Community Schools, Gochenour focuses on multi-agency collaboration and communication with all involved to increase school safety. A diverse team of professionals including a school



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psychologist, school-based interventionist, and guidance counselor, representing the Area Education Agency, Juvenile Justice System, and the school district has researched and supported the implementation of a school safety protocol, *I love u guys*, also used by Jeffco Schools (www.iloveu-guys.org). Students, staff, parents, and community members are included in communication, drills, debriefing, and more communication to keep safety on the forefront.

In addition, Gochenour collaborates with a network of area principals on safety plans so that they can learn from each other. While she acknowledges that they can never be 100% ready, training helps to provide a structure to fall back on during a real situation. School leaders are in a unique position to shape the conversation and take action through collaboration and communication to implement effective strategies to increase school safety.

Additional Pieces of this Puzzle

When asked what additional actions are essential for the reduction or elimination of school violence, DeAngelis pointed out that after every school shooting gun control is debated. "We need tougher gun laws. Why would someone need a semi-automatic or automatic weapon with 30 rounds?" On the other hand, he added, "If someone wants a weapon, they will find a way to get one." So, the debate continues.

Both DeAngelis and Gochenour expressed the need for a wide range of family supports. "Education does not exist in a vacuum. If kids are hungry, if kids don't feel safe, it's going to be hard for them to learn," stressed DeAngelis. Through the combination of frequent exposure to intense violence in entertainment and the deterioration of quality parent-child interaction, Gochenour feels she has witnessed a tendency toward the dehumanization and devaluing of life. "You can't turn on a screen without seeing violence where they are killing everybody. Violence has become a norm. . . Instead of life being a precious gift, now it is just getting through until we die and it makes me sad."

"Kids can be alone in the same room with their parents who are locked on their phones," Gochenour continued. She challenges parents to put down the screens and be present with their children. "When parents hook kids up with a tablet instead of interacting with them there is a disconnect that impacts their social-emotional development. There is a lot of stress in kids' lives that we are not addressing. [The solution] can't just be the schools. It can't just be the parents. It takes all of us working together. We must address mental health as kids are developing."

In closing, DeAngelis reflected that, "If someone would have told me a Columbine would have happened at Columbine, I would have said 'no way'. The message is that there are no *ifs*, rather, it is *when* it will happen. We need to be able to talk about [school violence]."

Each tragedy serves as a learning opportunity for all educators and administrators across the country on the need to improve school safety. "[The solution] can't just be the schools. It can't just be the parents. It takes all of us working together."

Thank you, Mr. DeAngelis and Mrs. Gochenour for making time to share their thoughts and experiences. Thank you for your advocacy for student safety and your tenacious support of students, educators, and families! I hope their efforts motivate you to continue the conversation and share your ideas and successes.

Resources

Jeffco Public Schools Security & Alerts site with a description of their programs. http://www.jeffcopublicschools.org/services/security

The "i love u guys" Standard Response Protocol is a free resource that is used by both Columbine and Lo-Ma to respond to school violence. http://iloveuguys.org

Safe2tell is a 24-hour tip line used in Colorado that allows law enforcement to follow up on anonymous tips. https://www.safe2tell.org

The National Association of School Psychologist (NASP) has made available their School Safety and Crisis Resources webpage for guidance in having difficult conversations with families, communities, and school staff, including Spanish-translated resources.http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis

The Council for Exceptional Children provides a School Safety: Policy and Practice Resources page.http://www.policyinsider.org/2018/03/school-safety-policy-practice-resources.html

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FEATURE

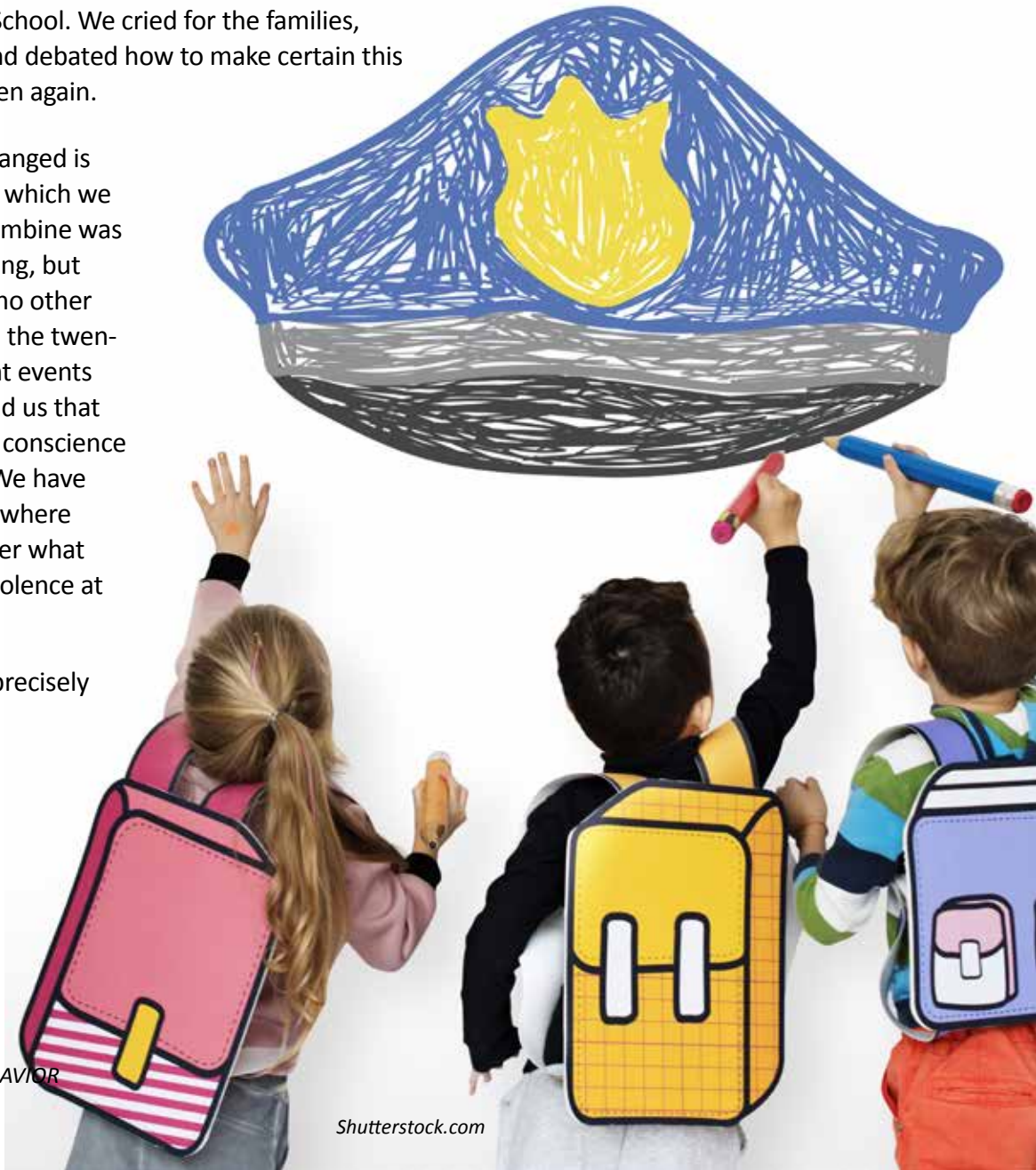
Rethinking the Role of School Resource Officers

By Nanci W. Johnson and Scott M. Fluke

In 1999, we watched and mourned as a nation as tragedy befell Columbine High School. We cried for the families, prayed for the fallen, and debated how to make certain this horror would never happen again.

It's 2018, and all that's changed is the size of the screens on which we watch the massacre. Columbine was not the first school shooting, but it gripped the nation like no other before it. As we approach the twenty-year anniversary, recent events in Parkland, Florida remind us that this grip on our collective conscience remains as tight as ever. We have clearly reached the point where all educators must consider what can be done to prevent violence at school.

The question, though, is precisely *how*.



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When a shooting happens, the talking heads on television argue about gun control, civil rights, arming teachers, and access to mental health services. While these issues are important, it cannot be forgotten that violence prevention starts with the day-to-day work educators do to build safe, positive, and welcoming environments. Each time an educator teaches a coping skill or reinforces positive behavior is a victory in the war against violence.

Reflecting the importance of daily victories, the positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) movement has taken off in recent decades. Now, thousands of schools nationwide are implementing evidence-based practices that have led to meaningful reductions in violent and other challenging behaviors (see www.PBIS.org). Replacing zero-tolerance and other punitive approaches, this proactive, skill-building approach is perhaps one of the most important advances in violence prevention of the 21st century.

Meanwhile, the national conversation remains focused on adding security features and personnel, especially in the form of school resource officers (SROs). Can SROs fit into a preventative, tiered model of prevention such as PBIS? The answer could be a resounding "Yes!" – but only if we change the way we think about the role of police in our schools.

How SROs Police Our Schools

Desperate to ensure the safety of our children, schools have invested millions of dollars in physical security, with the goal of constructing impenetrable fortresses to protect students from violent intruders. This approach has included installation of security cameras, metal detectors, bullet-proof glass, and secure entries. It has also led to a dramatic increase in the number of sworn police officers patrolling the halls.

SROs are not a new phenomenon. The first program began in Flint, Michigan in 1953. Its goal was to build relationships between adolescents and the police that protect them (Canady, James, & Nease, 2012). However, SROs were relatively rare until the 1990s, when they were hired by the thousands as a reaction to campus killings that made national news, including Columbine.

Photo by Cheryl Corley/NPR

L-R: Herman Saint-Louis, an off-duty police officer, provides security during to Sullivan High School during lunch time, School Resource Officer Aricel Dunn, and Principal Chad Adams.

The recent events in Parkland have already led to calls for more armed personnel in schools, including a tweet from the President of the United States. Proponents of increasing SROs argue that their presence increases school safety by deterring violent or illegal behavior. They argue that when something horrible happens, SROs can respond more quickly than off-campus police, potentially saving lives. Proponents also expect that exposure to officers at school decreases the negative attitude towards police that many adolescents carry, which could be a net positive for society at large.

Critics are concerned that having police in schools creates a culture of criminalizing misbehavior. In some cases, the SRO is seen as a metaphorical SWAT team member: someone who can immediately and aggressively respond when problem behavior occurs in schools. This may make schools more reactive and punitive, ultimately leading to criminal charges

that are starkly out of proportion with the infraction, including relatively minor behavior such as noncompliance or disrespect. Many YouTube videos show severe examples of hardcore disciplinary responses by SROs who stepped well beyond the call of duty.

Unfortunately, there is minimal evidence either way to help determine if SROs lead to increased school safety or if they lead to increased criminalizing of minor behaviors. Little research has been done, and confident conclusions cannot be made at this time.

Given the national conversation, it is likely that SROs will be a continued presence at school. Therefore, the educational community must seek to use them in a positive and effective manner. According to the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO, see https://nasro.org), SROs should play three roles on campus:

- Educator: SROs provide formal and informal instruction on topics related to drugs, alcohol, violence, and being a citizen in a law-abiding society.
- Informal counselor: SROs build relationships with students and help prevent them from engaging in harmful or illegal activities.
- Law enforcement: SROs respond to and investigate illegal or dangerous activities on campus.

It is clear from this triad that SROs should be thought of as more than an armed responder to an intruder. Instead of a reactive approach, SROs could be used in a proactive and preventative manner. Following the model first established in Flint, Michigan, SROs can function as Community Police Officers, with a focus on prevention and relationship building. Consider this comparison between a reactive and a proactive approach to the SRO role.

We have clearly reached the point where all educators must consider what can be done to prevent violence at school.

Photo by Cheryl Corley/NPR

Little research is available on the effectiveness of school resource officers. As outlined in this recent NPR piece, many researchers are concerned that having police in schools might lead to higher rates of suspensions, expulsions, and arrests for behavior that would otherwise have been handled in the classroom. This can introduce more students to the criminal justice system, and may be an example of the school-to-prison pipeline at work. This is especially true for students of color and students with disabilities, who are already disproportionately punished for minor behaviors (Girvan et al. 2017). https://www.npr.org/2018/03/08/591753884/do-police-officers-in-schools-really-make-them-safer

Reactive Approach	Proactive, Community Police Approach
• Respond to calls for assistance when teachers or administrators need to punish a student for misbehavior • Apply zero-tolerance, one-size fits-all approaches to infractions • Ready to handcuff or arrest students for misbehavior that is not dangerous • At increased risk for applying disproportionate punishment to students with disabilities and minority students	• Build relationships with school community members • Serve on committees, such as safety committees or PBIS teams • Develop and implement programs to encourage safety (e.g., bike safety events) and prevent violence • Work with staff to build effective school systems that encourage safe behavior • Focus on proactive, preventative measures • Lead community outreach efforts

In both approaches, the SRO is ready to respond and protect the school in the case of a violent assailant. It is what happens with the remaining 99.99% of their time that makes the difference.

Ultimately, the reactive approach does not conform to NASRO recommendations, nor is it likely to foster a safe learning environment. In contrast, the community policing approach seems far more likely to achieve this objective. Additionally, it fits the philosophy that violence prevention starts with moment-by-moment positive interactions between students, their peers, and the adults that serve them. View this video for an excellent example of community policing in action in an Arizona public school.

Integrating SROs into a PBIS Framework

Since the early 1990s, schools across the country have successfully established and sustained PBIS models to improve school climate. The PBIS framework is grounded in prevention logic and comprised of robust systems to collect and use behavioral data to inform evidence-based interventions. The core components of PBIS include:

- A common philosophy and purpose for the school
- Effective and organized leadership
- Teaching of clearly defined, desired behaviors
- Encouraging these desired behaviors through systematic reinforcement
- Discouragement of inappropriate behaviors through a consistent and logical hierarchy of consequences
- Ongoing progress monitoring and use of data to make decisions

When implemented with fidelity, these efforts have led to improved social competence and academic achievement for students in thousands of schools (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

The reactive SRO simply would not be an asset within a PBIS model. However, the proactive, community-policing SRO absolutely would. Moreover, the NASRO triad naturally fits into the three-tiered model of prevention:

- Tier 1: SROs collaborate with staff to teach all students the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and violence; how to be safe in the community; and how to work with police officers.
- Tier 2: SROs provide informal counseling to students at-risk of running afoul of the law, such as small group interventions targeting relationship building, dating violence, bullying, or drug abuse.

- Tier 3: SROs are prepared to respond to serious criminal situations to protect the safety of the school. Notably, this does not include rule code violations or minor infractions, such as disruption, defiance, or disrespect. Even at Tier 3, SROs should not be used as the disciplinarian on campus.

Successfully integrating SROs into a PBIS framework requires careful planning, training, and implementation with fidelity. This does not happen by accident: it happens only with a commitment to training from the school community, including the SRO and school leadership. SROs must be trained in core skills related to PBIS, especially relationship building, conflict management, crisis de-escalation, and prevention strategies.

But imagine for a moment the impact such an integration might have. Instead of SROs being seen as intimidating figures, they would be seen as positive adults whom students can go to in times of need. Instead of entering the classroom, handcuffs at the ready, they could enter prepared to co-teach a curriculum on social-emotional learning. Instead of waiting in the office to react when a crisis occurs, they could actively prevent crises by building relationships with students or positioning themselves in areas that office referral data have shown are the most problematic. Wouldn't this approach be more likely to increase school safety than acting as the long arm of the law? Wouldn't this approach ultimately lead to less violence?

What Can Educators Do Right Now to Collaborate with SROs?

Systems-change takes time, effort, and commitment. Integrating SROs into a PBIS model is not something that happens overnight, and educators should not wait before taking steps to make SROs a positive force in schools. Teachers and administrators can try these strategies on Monday morning to help SROs make a meaningful improvement in school safety:

In both approaches, the SRO is ready to respond and protect the school in the case of a violent assailant. It is what happens with the remaining 99.99% of their time that makes the difference.

What Can Teachers Do Now?

1. Introduce your students, especially those at-risk of behavioral infractions, to the SRO. Help the SRO find common ground with your students to assist them in building a relationship.
2. Invite the SRO to become a part of your classroom. Work with them to co-teach on topics related to safety, the law, or living in the community.
3. Ask your SRO to join the school PBIS team. Use them as a preventative measure by positioning them in areas that school-wide data show are problematic. Solicit their insight into strategies to prevent illegal activity at school.

What Can Administrators Do Now?

1. Most importantly, establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SROs working in your building. An MOU clearly outlines the expectations for how SROs should respond to incidents such as school code violations, classroom misbehavior (e.g., defiance), or true criminal behavior on campus. An MOU also clearly outlines when physical interventions are necessary. In this way, MOUs protect the SRO from being misused. A sample Memorandum of Understanding is available here.

2. Instead of treating them as patrolling disciplinarians, embrace an expanded role for SROs. Encourage them to take a community policing approach, and provide support for their initiatives.
3. Make it clear to staff who should be called to enforce the school code and respond to misbehavior instead of the SRO.

Educators Can Make the Difference in Preventing School Violence

We cannot afford to wait for policy makers to pass laws that protect our students. Educators must take the initiative to prevent violence through creating positive school climates. As an educator or SRO, it is your everyday interactions with students that can push them in the right direction, bit by bit minimizing the likelihood that they will become violent.

After all, similar efforts to address school safety, such as bullying and harassment prevention, have been incredibly effective. By some estimates, the movement toward bullying prevention has led to a 50% decrease in bullying behaviors at school (Waasdorp, Pas, Zablotsky, & Bradshaw, 2017). While we do not yet have clear evidence of the effect a community policing approach might have on school violence, one can imagine the impact it could have, especially when compared to a reactive approach.

April 20th marks the 19th anniversary of the Columbine shootings. Those 19 years have been marred by countless needless deaths on campus, and policy makers have made minimal progress in stopping the next one. Instead of waiting for them to save us, let it be our legacy that we took concrete, rational steps towards fostering safe schools. Embrace the efficacy of PBIS, and strive to integrate SROs and other violence prevention efforts into a model that we know works. In this way, we can truly make schools a safe place for our students.

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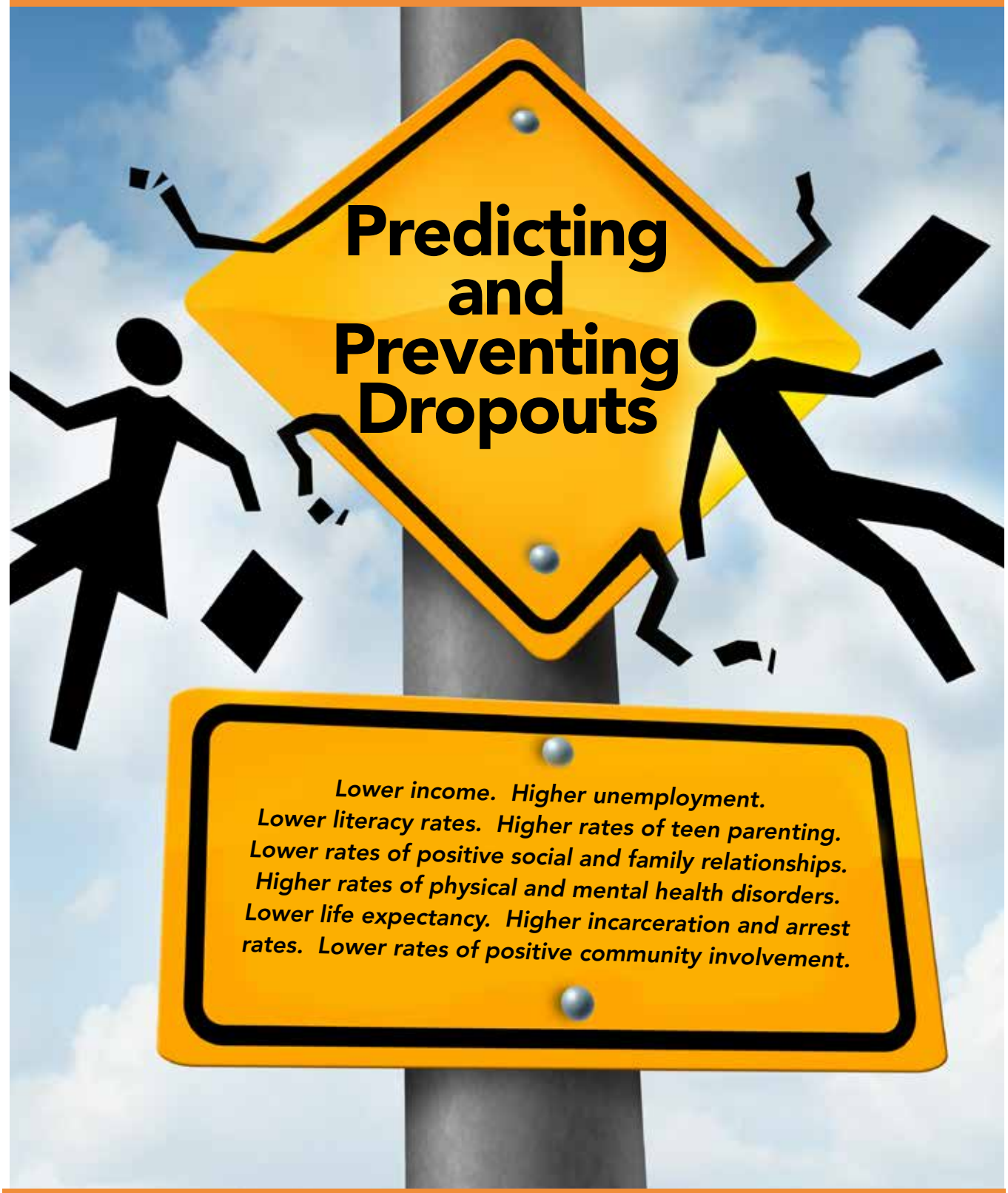

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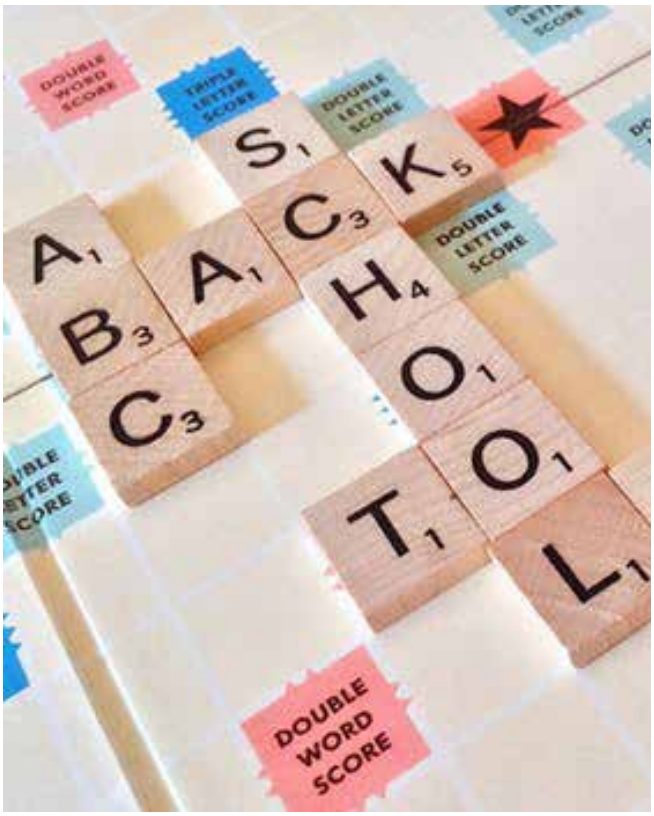
Predicting and Preventing Dropouts

By Shir Palmon, Nathan C. Speer, Natalie T. Hoff, Ana M. Damme, and Elisabeth J. Kane

We are all aware of the bleak outcomes for students who drop out of school. This is not what we want for our students, the youth in our communities, or our own children and grandchildren. As educators, we can attend to the factors that increase the likelihood of dropping out and work to decrease them while at the same time, increase the likelihood of school success and completion.

The decision to drop out of high school involves a complex process of disengagement that can start as early as the first grade. This disengagement develops from each student's personal experiences with various risk factors and interventions. Although students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) drop out at higher rates than other students, it is not because those risk factors work differently for them than for other students. Rather, students with EBD typically experience more risk factors at a younger age and do not have the protective supports in place to soften the impact of those risk factors.



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The ABCs of Dropping Out

While students drop out due to complex individual factors, there are three school factors strongly correlated with school success and completion - attendance, behavior, and course performance, commonly referred to as the ABCs of dropping out (Mac Iver & Mac Iver, 2009).

Attendance. Poor attendance is a reliable indicator of students at-risk for dropping out and those who miss 20% or more school days should be identified as at-risk (Balfanz, Wang, & Byrnes, 2010). Students struggle with attendance for several reasons. Some do not see the importance of regular attendance, while others find it more reinforcing to avoid school and associated stressors, including negative peer or teacher relationships, poor school performance, concern about social evaluation, and/or bullying. Other students want to attend school but are faced with barriers related to family complications, physical and mental health concerns, transportation, or financial responsibilities.

Behavior. As early as sixth grade, problem behaviors can predict the likelihood of dropping out (McKee & Caldarella, 2016). The seriousness of problem behavior is often measured by the number of office discipline referrals received and the probability of dropping out increases when office referrals result in suspensions, expulsions, and more serious forms of discipline for the student. Dropping out becomes even more likely for students with poor social relationships or inappropriate peer connections, often experienced by students with EBD.

Course performance. Poor course or academic performance is a third predictor of dropping out. Students at-risk of or failing one or more classes and students who do not believe they can successfully complete their classes may choose to drop out. Being faced with grade retention is another risk factor since 75% of dropouts have been retained at least once (Jimerson, 2001) and almost 100% of students retained twice eventually drop-out (Shepard & Smith, 1990).

Other Predictors

Although the ABCs are the most often mentioned predictors of dropping out, other variables must also be considered.

Socioeconomic status. Students who come from lower socioeconomic status (SES) families drop out at higher rates than students from higher SES families (Christle et al., 2007). When compared to peers from higher SES backgrounds, students from low SES backgrounds are more likely to be negatively affected by lower expectations and peer rejection, which may lead to behavioral problems and/or poor course performance.

School climate. Poor adult-student relationships, high rates of bullying, cold or authoritarian attitudes, and negative attitudes of students, staff, and the community regarding the school, all contribute to poor school climate. Poor climate leads to lower student engagement, as seen by a lack of involvement in activities or sports, a feeling of not belonging, or lower attendance, another drop out predictor. Any student faced with poor school climate and low engagement, particularly students with EBD who are often isolated, ostracized, and bullied, are at an elevated risk to drop out.

Lucas was identified with an emotional/behavioral disorder (EBD) in fourth grade. He has consistently struggled academically and was retained in second grade. Lucas was suspended multiple times in middle school due to his behavior. He is from a relatively poor rural family and has very few friends at school. He prefers to spend his time working on the family farm instead of attending school.

Another student, Gwen, was identified with an emotional/behavioral disorder (EBD) in third grade and has struggled in math and science since beginning school. In middle school, Gwen stopped attending school regularly and is now on probation for truancy. She has recently discovered that she is pregnant.

Students who miss 20% or more school days should be identified as at-risk for dropping out.

School-Wide Dropout Screening

Many schools have begun using school-wide dropout screening, often referred to as Early Warning Systems (Frazelle & Nagel, 2015), to help identify students at-risk for dropping out as early as possible. This process effectively collects data on the ABCs of dropping out and other factors to determine which students need more intensive interventions to reduce their dropout risk. As data for each student is entered into the system, dropout risk is calculated based on each factor's weighted correlation. Some screening tools can also identify the areas in which the student should receive support or intervention, such as academics, behavior, attendance, or engagement.

Before schools conduct dropout screening, it is important to ensure that there is a plan for intervening with students who are identified as needing additional supports. To screen without having a plan for intervention is unethical and not useful. School teams such as Student Assistance Teams or Individualized Education Program Teams must consider the potential areas for intervention and be prepared to implement appropriate interventions based on the screening data. Educators unfamiliar with their school's screening process can ask their administrators, learn how it is implemented, become involved in the process, or advocate for developing this screening if it is not in place.

Lucas was enrolled in a school where dropout prevention was not a significant concern. Over 90% of students routinely graduated from his school, so

administrators did not specifically focus on dropout prevention on a school-wide basis. Lucas was never identified as a dropout risk although he had caring teachers.

Gwen attended a school that had placed an emphasis on dropout prevention and had an Early Warning System. She was identified as needing intervention starting with her ninth-grade year.

Strategies to Address the ABCs

There are a number of commonly accepted strategies educators and/or teams can employ to specifically address the ABCs of dropping out. The strategies presented here were selected because they can be employed by individual educators in their daily work with students, as well as by schoolwide teams working to implement these approaches across the school.

Increasing Reinforcement. Increasing reinforcement is effective in improving student school behavior and helping students feel cared for by school personnel. Behavior specific praise is used to verbally praise and give positive attention for desired behaviors such as coming to school, turning in homework, passing an exam, or asking for assistance. This form of reinforcement shows students that their desired behavior is noticed, increasing the likelihood that they will continue these behaviors. Teachers say, "I like how quietly you are working on your worksheet" rather than "Nice work" so students know exactly what behaviors are being reinforced. In the classroom, each student should receive at least four praise statements to every one corrective statement given by the teacher.

Another way to provide reinforcement is to give students tickets or coupons for displaying desired behavior. These tickets are later exchanged for various rewards. Rewards can be activities, items, or recognition such as earning a special privilege or 10 minutes to play a game on the iPad, exchanging

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tickets for items at the school store or cafeteria, or spending time with a preferred adult or peer. To be effective the rewards should be reinforcing to the student but also acceptable to the teacher or school. Reinforcement can be used to improve attendance, behavior, and course performance.

Building Relationships with Students. Building relationships with students is an effective way to increase student engagement and potentially reduce dropping out. Using the 2 x 10 Strategy (Wlodkowski, 1983) a teacher, or any adult, spends two minutes per day for 10 consecutive school days talking with a student about anything the student wishes to discuss. Over the 10 days, this simple strategy helps the teacher learn about the student and his/her interests and builds the teacher-student relationship.

Another strategy for building relationships is mentoring. A mentor is a person who teaches, helps, or advises a less experienced person. Mentoring is commonly used in schools and can be done through

an official program such as Big Brothers Big Sisters or unofficially when an adult takes an interest in a student and works with that student in an effort to prevent him/her from dropping out. As in the 2X10 Strategy, mentors can meet with students on a regular basis to talk, engage in an activity, and/or share school progress. Mentoring programs have resulted in improvements in mentees' confidence, academic performance, and school attendance.

Academic Supports. Finally, academic supports can also build relationships while increasing student academic performance and decreasing the risk of dropping out. Teachers can meet with individual students or small groups for tutoring, pre-teaching, re-teaching, and/or skill remediation. Educators can develop and facilitate peer tutoring programs in which older or more advanced students are trained to tutor younger or less skilled students. These supports can also be offered in before and after school programs or in homework clubs.

Improving Communication with and Involvement of Parents. When parents are involved with their children's education, students are more likely to succeed academically and less likely to dropout. Educators can increase communication with parents in a variety of ways including home-school notes, calling/texting parents, having regular problem-solving meetings with parents, and making a genuine effort to involve the parents in their child's academic and/or behavior plans. Educators should make positive contacts with each parent at least twice a month either through phone, email, or in person. This shift in communication could serve to break the cycle of avoidance and foster positive relationships with all families. This communication could also include schoolwide strategies to increase family awareness of school events through school newsletters, emails, the school website, and flyers. Schools can also increase the number of family events held. While strategies may be implemented to some degree by individual educators for individual students, the impact can be broadened if implemented on a school-wide basis.

■ ■ ■

Lucas continued to struggle with academics, failing classes, and falling behind in credits. He was not motivated to do well in school because he knew he could eventually dropout and work on his family farm. With his parents' consent, Lucas decided to drop out when he turned 16.

One of Gwen's teachers began the 2 x 10 Strategy with her, eventually becoming a mentor to Gwen, and helped her find a way to get to school more often. This teacher, Gwen, and Gwen's mother had monthly meetings to problem-solve through Gwen's difficulties, and made a plan for Gwen to graduate.

■ ■ ■

Dropout Recovery

Although it is better to prevent students from dropping out, after students drop out, school professionals can work to find ways to re-enroll those students. Unfortunately, many educators do not focus on students who have dropped out. Often times these students are some of the most challenging to work with and difficult to maintain communication with. Programs known as Dropout Recovery, Reentry Programs, and Second Chance Programs assist students to get their diploma or GED, teach students skills that meet their needs, and prepare students for employment or parenting. Some alternative school and employment preparation programs may bring students who have dropped out back to school, as well as prevent some students from dropping out.

Addressing the ABCs through reinforcement, relationships, supports, and communication.

Alternative Schools. Students who have dropped out or are imminently planning to do so may attend an alternative school and not face the factors in the traditional school environment that may have triggered their decision to drop out. They may have flexible schedules and allowed to progress at their own pace. Alternative school classes typically have a lower student-to-teacher ratio than typical schools, prioritize individualized learning goals, focus on a specific set of skills, have a more supportive school culture, and provide other forms of support such as parenting courses, substance abuse treatment, or college credit options.

Employment Preparation Programs. Similar to alternative schools, employment preparation programs, can be used for high risk students before they drop out, as well as for a path for re-entry of students who have already dropped out. These programs often have established partnerships with community organizations and allow students to get work experience and sometimes credits towards graduation. Often, they assist students in obtaining a job after they complete the employment preparation program. Some examples of these programs are Job Corps, National Guard Youth, and Youth Build.

Lucas' school did not employ any dropout recovery programs; he never returned to school. He worked on the family farm for three years and lost contact with his former classmates. Unfortunately, Lucas committed suicide in his mid-20's. Although we cannot attribute his suicide to dropping out of school, we can never know what his life would have been if he had stayed in school.

Gwen had her baby, returned to school, and, with the school's support, graduated after making up credits during the summer. She has since started her post-secondary education at a local community college and is working on her degree as a nurse.

Given the various negative outcomes associated with dropping out of high school, dropout prevention needs to be a priority in all schools. Across both individual educators and school-wide efforts, it is critical that educators are aware of the predictors of dropping out, assess all students to identify those at risk, and provide individually designed supports. Many of the strategies that prevent and reduce the risk for students dropping out are already familiar to teachers serving students with EBD. These educators can be particularly helpful in designing and delivering effective dropout prevention programs.

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Trauma Informed Classrooms and Schools

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By Elisabeth Kane, Nicole Bricko, Natalie Hoff, and Reece Peterson

Evidence is mounting that many of the students we serve in school have experienced some form of trauma. Current events such as recent school shootings have heightened our awareness of the dramatic effects trauma producing events may have on all of us.

What is trauma? Trauma is an individual's emotional response to distressing or disturbing experiences. These events or circumstances may be experienced directly, witnessed, learned about from others, or perceived by the affected person. The events may involve but are not limited to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence (American Psychiatric Association, 2017).

There are a wide variety of possible experiences which children may have been exposed to which can lead to trauma responses. These experiences include emotional or sexual abuse or neglect; domestic or community violence; school violence or bullying; natural or man-made disasters; exposure to war, terrorism, or refugee conditions; and medical trauma. In addition, household dysfunction such as mental illness, substance abuse, divorce, or other factors may

accumulate and contribute to trauma responses. Several studies, such as the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) studies (see page 33), have suggested that many more students than we may realize have experienced trauma in their lives. Often these traumatic experiences are associated with difficulties at school and in the community, and are characterized by learning difficulties, external behaviors such as aggression, and internalizing behaviors such as withdrawal and depression.

Stress Response Systems

All of us experience stress in our daily lives. Stress may be thought of as a continuum from positive stress to tolerable stress to "toxic stress." Our bodies naturally respond to threat with functional "fight or flight" stress response systems. Most of us have experienced this feeling of heightened arousal, during events such as nearly being hit by a car or slipping on ice, but we usually recover quickly. However, when individuals remain in that fight or flight state, a state of arousal for an extended period of time, it can lead to changes in the individual's responding to environmental stimuli. For youth in schools, these changes present challenges throughout their school day.

Current discussions of childhood trauma, have examined the growing evidence for the effects of trauma on the developing brain. Although it is beyond our scope here to get into the details, there is evidence that traumatic experiences and the prolonged stress response of toxic/chronic stress can actually cause functional changes to the brain structure of youth. If not treated, it is likely that these changes will be permanent (Shonkoff et. al., 2012).

At a basic level, we can view the effects of traumatic experiences by understanding the brain in two functional parts, the "thinking" and the "survival" brain (Ford & Wortman, 2013). The survival brain provides us with the ability to make choices of whether to fight or flee when we perceive danger. When children are exposed to stressful situations across time (i.e., chronic/toxic stress), the survival brain is constantly activated which can lead to less use and inhibited development of the thinking brain. This can lead children to have deficiencies in key competencies needed for school success, such as learning, memory, concentration, and executive function skills. This perspective may help us to have a more constructive approach to viewing and approaching these behaviors, rather than thinking of them as being intentionally annoying or out-of-control.

Trauma Symptoms and Resilience

There may be at least three dimensions of trauma symptoms. One dimension is the trajectory of symptoms over time, whether they are acute and short-lived, or long term and chronic. Another dimension is the severity of the symptoms, from relatively mild symptoms with minimal interference to daily functioning to severe symptoms which may be incapacitating or interfere substantially with normal day to day functioning. Students can exhibit a combination of affective or internalizing symptoms such as fear, withdrawal, depression, or even ideation of suicide; interpersonal difficulties; externalizing behavioral symptoms such as verbal and physical aggression, cognitive impairments such as in memory and concentration, and/or biological symptoms such as the dysregulation of their stress response systems.

Trauma responses are complex and unique. Some students who have experienced, what are perceived to be, severely distressing events appear to have no adverse symptoms. Some have theorized that this may be due to resilience factors that allow

children to effectively cope with and overcome adverse experiences (SAMHSA.org, 2016). Such protective or resilience factors that buffer children from the negative effects of traumatic experiences and stressors include parental and social support, effective parenting skills, adaptive coping skills, community resources, school support, and high self-esteem and self-efficacy. Conversely, there are risk factors that can undermine resilience, such as poverty, discrimination, social isolation, and poor parental and social support, past trauma experiences, community violence, and illness. However, we simply don't know enough to completely understand why some students are adversely affected and others are not. We do know that children have better outcomes when they have more protective factors than risk factors, so our focus is on helping to build resiliency in our students.

Three Examples of Trauma

The following are examples of differing types and features of trauma from our work in schools and clinical settings. These fictional examples are relatively severe forms of trauma, and are not necessarily representative since trauma responses are unique to each individual. However, they represent some of the wide array of traumatic experiences which may affect our students. Later we will share examples of how educators addressed and tried to build resiliency for each of these examples.

Group Trauma

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Mayfare Elementary school is a Title 1 elementary school in an urban Midwestern district. Within the school, there is a notably large and growing population of refugee students who have been exposed to a wide range of traumatic events in their past. While many of these students' specific backgrounds and experiences remain unclear, each had exposure to a unique variety of traumatic events and stressors. The violence and deaths associated with war were unavoidable. Examples of experiences parents, friends, and family members provided to school staff included walking miles to avoid persecution for religious beliefs, hiding in their homes during raids and artillery fire, and disappearing family members. Relocating to a new country, a new home, and a new school and leaving behind members of their community, family and friends can be traumatic itself. These children had the additional stress of learning a new culture, a new language, and adapting to new cultural and school norms. All of these created a complex set of individual traumatic experiences for these students. Many of these children exhibited internalizing symptoms such as withdrawal, depression, anxiety, and selective mutism, as well as externalizing behaviors such as running away from school and various forms of verbal and physical aggression.

Some events during the day appeared to be particularly difficult for this group of students. One example was fire drills. During the drills, loud bells and flashing lights were extremely distressing to this group of students, as they triggered memories and feelings of being in real and immediate danger. Emergency vehicle sirens or other loud noises also served as triggers for problem behaviors like hiding, screaming, running away, and aggression. Reminders of past trauma are exacerbated when these students do not understand new cultural customs (e.g., practicing for disasters) or have the language to verbalize their fear.

Cumulative Trauma

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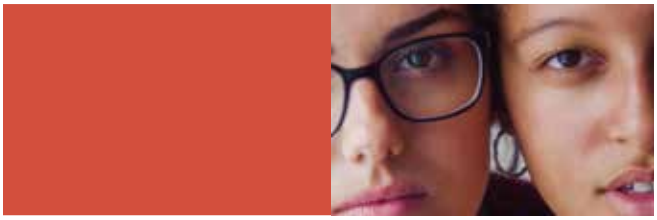
Martin is a 5-year old Hispanic boy who started Kindergarten at a Title I elementary school. This

little boy had experienced a great number of every day stressors and some very traumatic experiences. When Martin was 3 years old his father was murdered. Martin overheard his family members discussing graphic details about his father's fatal injuries. His father's death also led to conflict between his mom's and dad's families, including frequent confrontations, arguments, and domestic violence on several occasions. Thus, in addition to losing his father, he also lost relationships with his father's family. He also experienced chronic household dysfunction which included coming from a low-income household, and living in a crowded space with a lot of people coming and going. He also experienced the loss of his uncle and grandfather in the year after his father died. His mother was not coping well with the death of his father and cumulative stressors, leading her to model inappropriate coping strategies.

When Martin entered kindergarten, it quickly became clear to his teachers that he was not coping well. He was displaying frequent tantrums in the classroom and inappropriate attention seeking behaviors with his peers. He was also withdrawn and struggled to make friends at school. At home, Martin was hyper vigilant about family members – constantly asking where they were going and when they would return. He asked his mom where he would live once she died. Nightmares and clingy behavior were typical. He was perpetually worried that he would lose the people in his life.

Acute Trauma



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Tasha and Brianna were both 16 years old and attended the same urban Midwest high school. They had a similar peer group but were not close friends. One night, the girls decided to go to a party with a mutual friend. At the party, both girls were sexually assaulted by the same two peers. They had guilt about being at the party because they had not followed their families' rules about telling their parents where they were. Tasha had even turned off her phone's GPS prior to going to the event so that her parents did not know where she was. When they got home after the party, neither girl told her parents what happened. However, the next day at school, Tasha's peers started asking questions about the party, as they had seen videos and pictures on social media. It was stressful for her to be asked about the party. She went to the school resource officer with whom she had a close and trusting relationship, and disclosed what had happened the night before. The resource officer contacted both girls' parents and both families were referred to the Child Advocacy Center (CAC). CACs are community agencies that provide mental health support, legal help, and other services to children and families who have experienced physical or sexual abuse or neglect.

Determining Who has Experienced Trauma

Although these examples show obvious effects of trauma exposure, identifying students with trauma responses can be difficult, particularly when trauma symptoms may be similar to other disorders like ADHD and depression. However, to improve school-wide identification of students whom are experiencing trauma, the National Association of School Psychologists Safety and Crisis Response team (NASP School Safety and Crisis Response Committee, 2015) provided a list of warning signs and symptoms educators and school professionals should be aware of. Particularly, educators and staff should look for abrupt changes in functioning, symptoms that do not decrease over time, or symptoms that severely impact the child's ability to participate in everyday activates. Some of their identified warning signs for trauma include:

- Disruption or withdrawal from peer relationships
- Decline in school performance

- Physical complaints with no apparent cause
- Threats of harm to self or others
- Repeated nightmares
- Regression in behaviors such as thumb-sucking and bedwetting
- Sleeping and eating disturbances
- Increased arousal, agitation, irritability, or aggressiveness

School-wide screening is one option for identifying students who may have experienced trauma. It involves assessing the entire school population through targeted surveys or interviews (Eklund & Rossen, 2016). If employed, it is important for educators to have a plan in place to quickly and immediately address students who are identified. However, most strategies to support students experiencing trauma do not differ greatly from supports we should use for all children with behavioral needs. Thus, not all experts recommend school-wide screening for trauma.

What can educators do to build resilience in students?

While the ACEs studies have provided important information on the effects of trauma exposure and cumulative stressors, they are not intervention studies. They have addressed longitudinal outcomes of trauma, provided motivation to find avenues to prevent or avert traumatic experiences for children and youth, and empowered us to discover ways to assist children to compensate for trauma and debilitating stress. They do not highlight or provide any interventions, let alone specific guidance for educators on what to do about trauma in educational settings. Although there are clinical interventions that have a validated evidence base for addressing trauma (such as Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) and promising interventions for school-based mental health practitioners (such as Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in School), these interventions have not been translated to validated school-based educator implemented interventions. However, we can use the validated interventions from other settings as a guide to useful evidence-informed strategies. These are strategies that we know can be beneficial for all students based on previous research, and may be especially helpful to students who have experienced trauma.

Develop a Trauma Lens. The most important strategy for educators is to develop a different perspective or framework for looking at behavior and the function of that behavior. This has been referred to as developing a "trauma lens." In other words, educators must understand that a student's observable behavior may be a response to traumatic events rather than just defiant or problem behavior. For many students, their inappropriate behaviors might be adaptive in other settings but are not appropriate in the school environment. Rather than punishing those behaviors, we need to think about how we as educators can add supports to the environment to facilitate coping skills and appropriate alternative behaviors.

- View behavior as a result of survival brain responses. Interpret the behavior based on its function and possible trauma experienced.
- Implement trauma-sensitive school values including safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment (Fallot & Harris, 2009).
- Move from a punitive approach to a more restorative or therapeutic orientation in working with these students.
- Reinforce student resiliency by supporting parents and family members, and providing a safe, comforting and positive learning environment in classrooms and across school.
- Take time to nurture a positive, supportive school climate.
- Identify needs and provide referrals to outside mental health resources.

Implement Strategies to Support Resilience. Utilizing a trauma lens, educators should employ strategies in the classroom which will be likely to permit students to function in spite of their experiences with trauma. Ultimately, children learn best when they feel safe and supported, so facilitating a nurturing school environment is critical when caring for students experiencing trauma responses. These strategies are not necessarily unique to children who have experienced trauma, but beneficial for all kids. These might include:

- **Strengthen universal supports.** Implement evidence-based school wide prevention and supports for academics and behavior based on the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Positive Behavior Interventions and supports (PBIS) models.
- **Provide frequent task-specific positive reinforcement**. Catch students being good and praise them frequently for appropriate behavior.
- **Establish consistency.** Maintain usual routines and consistent expectations to sustain a predictable protective environment
- **Provide choices.** Allow students to have some control over their environment and avoid power struggles.
- **Model appropriate behavior.** Model appropriate problem-solving strategies, frustration management, etc., both during potentially triggering events, and typical instruction time.
- **Teach social and emotional skills.** Teach students language about "feelings" to express emotions. Teach self-awareness, stress management, mindfulness, coping, and relaxation skills.
- **Foster trusted relationships with students.** Take time to develop relationships with students and make them feel important. This can include discussing topics of interests with students.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Studies

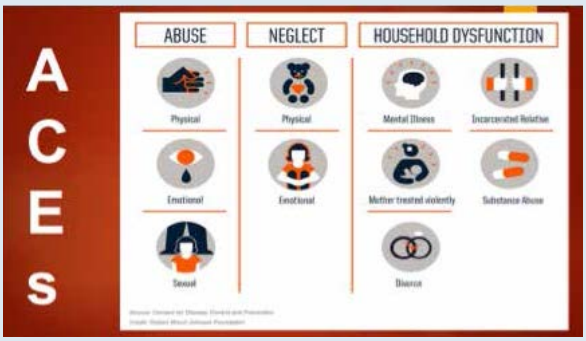

Photo obtained from NPR website. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences study (ACEs) is one of the largest investigations into the long-term effects of childhood abuse and neglect and household dysfunction (Felitti, et al., 1998). The study was initially conducted in San Diego in the mid-1990s and found that over half of all adults had experienced traumatic events in their youth. Additional states, including Iowa, Virginia, and New York, have continued to collect their own ACEs data to further understand the longitudinal effects of these childhood experiences (Central Iowa, 2016).

Researchers have found that ACEs are strongly related to the development of risk factors for disease and well-being throughout life. ACEs experienced in childhood were shown to influence the rate of social, emotional, and cognitive impairment. Individuals who experienced multiple adverse events were more likely to have negative outcomes as adults. A major implication of the study was the identification of household dysfunction as an adverse event. ACEs were not limited to major or severe experiences. ACEs studies are the basis for much of the research and discussion about adverse events in childhood and poor life outcomes. Although the ACEs studies provide further understanding of the long-term effects of trauma, they provide little data or recommendations about how to treat trauma, nor the role that educators can play in intervention addressing trauma.

- **Identify and address triggers.** Employ functional thinking and anticipate triggers. Accommodate and adapt the environment when reasonable. Take time to teach replacement behaviors in response to triggers.
- **Utilize community resources.** Identify and connect with community resources

Supporting Group Trauma

Group Trauma

Universal Supports

Identify Triggers

Teach Social Emotional Skills

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In order to address the triggering and potentially re-traumatizing events for these students, a plan was put into place to de-sensitize students to fire drills. Students were explicitly taught what the lights and sirens meant during a fire alarm. Community resources were utilized as a fire fighter visited classrooms to explain the purpose of fire drills and the difference between a practice and real event. Although fire drills are chaotic and unpredictable by nature, we attempted to provide as much consistency and control as possible. Students were given additional preparation time during drills (i.e., they were made aware of the drill prior to the alarms sounding). This allowed for students to be prepared when they heard the sirens and reduced chances of re-traumatization. Once students better understood the purpose of fire drills they also became peer models for other students. Additionally, following each fire drill, students had the opportunity to process with school staff about their experience and any emotions the fire drill may have brought up.

Beyond that, students were taught coping and social-emotional skills to address emotions that arose during the drills or during other times at school. Teachers modeled problem-solving and anger management both during drills, and throughout other problem time as well as during typical instruction time. Students received instruction to help them better express and understand any emotions they felt during school. Following the implementation of these strategies, decreases in problem behaviors occurred during fire drills as well as throughout the school day. These strategies remained in place, and continued as new students enrolled in school.

Supporting Martin

Cumulative Trauma

Identify Triggers

Teach Coping &
Provide Choices

Utilize Community Resources

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Early on, Martin's school counselor recognized that he was experiencing trauma symptoms beyond what could be effectively addressed during school hours. She connected him and his mother with community resources. Martin and his mother were referred to an outside clinician to receive cognitive-behavioral therapy. Therapy focused on teaching Martin how to identify feelings in his own body and express his feelings to others. Additionally, he and his mother were referred to a local community agency that provided peer grief support groups in order to normalize their grief experience and provide appropriate coping models.

Next, his teachers, his mother, and his therapist met together to identify triggers for him. Through reviewing data and discussing anecdotal observations, we recognized that receiving critical feedback and hearing raised voices was very hard for Martin to cope with. The team discussed which demands and classroom routines could be adapted in order to help him feel safe in school, prevent behavior problems, and focus on learning.

Based on these discussions, a critical part of therapy and school supports focused on teaching coping skills at home and school. We worked as a team to build consistency in our response to his behavior problems, including anticipating triggers, prompting and teaching relaxation strategies, and reinforcing appropriate behavior and relaxation practice. Over time, Martin's trauma symptoms dramatically reduced within the classroom, and he learned when and how to engage in relaxation strategies to calm himself down.

Tasha and Brianna – Differing Outcomes

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Despite the fact that Tasha and Brianna experienced the same traumatic event, they had very different outcomes. Brianna had an older sister who had experienced sexual assault and had gone through the same treatment program that Brianna was in. Therefore, her parents opted out of the parent support group, and Brianna started skipping sessions. She was experiencing high levels of anxiety, guilt, and depression, and rarely attended school. Her grades were dropping and her parents and teachers were becoming increasingly concerned. She and her family were referred to an individual therapist who could work more closely with the family unit and school personnel to assist Brianna and provide adequate support.

Tasha, on the other hand, attended the treatment consistently with the support her parents who also attended the parent support group. Through this group, Tasha and her parents learned several coping strategies and gained knowledge regarding sexual offenders. Tasha continued attending school regularly and received support from several teachers and adults at school with whom she had close relationships (school psychologist and school resource officer, in particular). These school relationships were critical in Tasha's successful outcome, as they provided a safe place for Tasha to go to take a break when the school environment became overwhelming. The school also provided support by arranging her schedule to avoid interactions with peers who were not supportive in the months that followed her sexual assault. Tasha's grades started to improve and she reported reductions in anxiety, guilt, and depression following the incident. At home, Tasha's parents maintained consistency in her schedule by coming up with a safety plan that both Tasha and her parents felt comfortable with. This was helpful to increase safety precautions while still allowing Tasha to maintain peer relationships and avoid feelings of social isolation.

Although these two girls of the same age experienced the same traumatic event at the same time, the outcomes of their trauma appear to be quite different. We don't know why, but might speculate that Tasha's seemingly better outcome is due to a stronger support network, which allowed her more resiliency in dealing with this trauma.

The effects of trauma on students in schools are very complex, and we don't have strategies to alleviate the experiences which caused the trauma. However, it is possible to ameliorate some of the behavioral symptoms of trauma. When employing a trauma lens school personnel can better respond to inappropriate behavior by understanding its function, focusing on problem-solving, and fostering trusted relationships. A variety of strategies and behavioral supports can decrease the effects of trauma related symptoms in students and improve coping skills. Our goal as educators must be to build resiliency in all students, but especially those who may have experienced trauma.

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Additional Resources for Educators for Children Experiencing Trauma

Tips for working with traumatized kids in your classroom, BamRadio Podcast, ACSD Episode # 4263: www.bamradionetwork.com/teaching-teens/4263-tips-for-working-with-traumatized-kids-in-your-classroom

Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative. *Helping traumatized children learn. A report and policy agenda.* https://traumasensitiveschools.org/

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What Is a Child Advocacy Center?

Child Advocacy Centers are resources set up to respond to suspected child abuse and neglect by combining law enforcement, medical professionals, forensic interviewers and others to provide expertise in one agency. The National Children's Alliance states that

> To understand what a Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) is, you must understand what children face without one. Without a CAC, the child may end up having to tell the worst story of his or her life over and over again, to doctors, cops, lawyers, therapists, investigators, judges, and others. They may have to talk about that traumatic experience in a police station where they think they might be in trouble, or may be asked the wrong questions by a well-meaning teacher or other adult that could hurt the case against the abuser.
>
> When police or child protective services believe a child is being abused, the child is brought to the CAC – a safe, child-focused environment – by a caregiver or other "safe" adult. At the CAC, the child tells their story once to a trained interviewer who knows the right questions to ask in a way that does not re-traumatize the child. Then, a team that includes medical professionals, law enforcement, mental health, prosecution, child protective services, victim advocacy, and other professionals make decisions together about how to help the child based on the interview. CACs offer therapy and medical exams, plus courtroom preparation, victim advocacy, case management, and other services. This is called the multidisciplinary team (MDT) response and is a core part of the work of CACs.

The National Children's Alliance is the national association and accrediting body for a network of more than 850 accredited Children's Advocacy Centers in the U.S. http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/cac-model.

Cultivating Kindness and Building Bravery: Reducing Classroom Bullying

By Katie Mosher, Guadalupe Ramirez, Susan Swearer, and Alia Noetzel

It is the end of the day and you are standing at the front of your classroom teaching a group of restless 5th graders when you notice a small group of students whispering and giggling. After several futile redirections, you approach them. As an observant teacher, you already are aware of the bullying that occurs in your classroom and the students who are relentlessly targeted. However, when you reach the students giggling, they apologize and sheepishly tell you that they were just

too excited to see another student's reaction when they read their "kind note." You hear one of them say, "Shhh don't let anyone find out we're Secret Kindness Agents!" At this point you are thoroughly confused and glance over to the other student's desk. You notice a sticky note with the words, "You are an awesome person! – anoneemus." As you look back and forth between the student beaming while holding the note and the students hardly able to contain their excitement over giving the note, you realize a couple things:

- You have a great word for next week's spelling test.
- Your students are demonstrating one of the most valuable life skills – showing kindness.

Utopian fantasy or real possibility?

Does this sound like a classroom in an alternate universe? If you predicted that story was going to end with the students making fun of another student, unfortunately, you may have been correct. Specifically, research indicates that students with disabilities may be at an increased risk of involvement in bullying. Swearer and colleagues (2012) found that students receiving special education services were 1.43 times more likely to report both bullying others and being bullied. Most schools have school-wide anti-bullying policies or programs in place and disciplinary procedures when students are involved in bullying. Despite these efforts, research demonstrates, media amplifies, and teachers observe in their classrooms, bullying is not ending.

What's missing?

One problem with the way that we approach bullying is that our goal is to end or reduce bullying. This is important, but in reality is difficult to achieve. Instead, we think it's important to focus on a larger goal - promoting kindness and bravery. If we ask 100 teachers what they hope to teach their students, most do not say "to not bully others" or "to successfully divide fractions." Now more than ever, teachers say, "to be a good human being, treat others with kindness and respect, stand up for others, and contribute to this world." These goals are incompatible with bullying. We argue that we should focus less on trying to teach students not to bully at school and instead focus on teaching and reinforcing kindness and bravery to all students.

What is kindness and bravery?

Take a second to define the terms *kindness* and *bravery*. Was it difficult? These terms, although used often, are somewhat ambiguous. How do students know what these words mean and what they look like in their lives if we don't teach and show them?

- Kindness has been defined as being generous, caring and considerate. It has been used interchangeably with characteristics such as empathy, sympathy, compassion, and helpfulness. Some examples of what kindness may look like in the classroom include: helping a classmate with an assignment, asking another student about their interests, or giving compliments to others.
- Bravery has been more difficult for researchers to define and has been defined as moral courage. Some examples of what bravery in the classroom might look like include: inviting a classmate to play at recess, attempting a task never done before, talking to an adult about a problem they don't know how to solve, or not joining in when their friends are making fun of someone.

Why do kindness and bravery go together?

Researchers are finding that kind and brave behaviors, when fostered together create the perfect solution to ending bullying. We argue that kindness and bravery are the solution to stopping bullying.

Teaching Kindness has a Positive Impact: Secret Kindness Agents

What if I told you that in a Midwestern Elementary School there are 4th and 5th grade boys giggling while plotting how to carry out secret missions of kindness? In our school, we have implemented a new intervention to spread kindness, reduce bullying, and re-direct energy spent on disruptive behaviors.

The group is called Secret Kindness Agents, inspired by the book *Secret Kindness Agents* by Ferial Pearson. Students were chosen for the group and sworn to secrecy on the first day. Each group includes at least six students and is a mixture of target students with behavioral concerns and students who can model desired behavior. The top secret aspect of this group is emphasized with code words, pinky swears, missions written on confidential paper in code, and the required destruction of their missions after reading them. Each week during a 20-minute secret agent meeting over lunch, the group processes their previous mission and receives a new assignment. The students graduate after 8 weeks, receive a certificate, and are given the option of training new incoming students.

I will be honest, at first we were skeptical that a group of 5th grade boys would buy into this idea. However, not only do they love the exciting mission challenges each week and take the secretive aspect seriously, they also have grasped the importance of the group. Some of these students struggle with bullying behaviors, conflicts with teachers, and disruptive behaviors in the classroom, yet they are able to focus some of their energy each week searching for ways to be kind to others.

Some example missions are:

- Writing an anonymous thank-you letter to a former teacher
- Giving 3 peers they don't normally interact with a meaningful compliment
- Offering to help someone without being asked or prompted
- Finding out one interesting fact about their teacher
- Including someone who is by themselves at recess or in gym class
- Completing and recording as many acts of kindness as they can in a week and try to meet a group goal
- Creating their own kind missions

Some processing questions included:

- How did that mission make you feel?
- How do you think it made the other person feel?
- Was it hard/easy to do?
- If you did this mission more often how do you think it would impact your life?
- Do you think when you are kind to others it makes them want to be more kind to other people?
- How are these missions changing your life or do you notice any differences in your life?

It may be counter-intuitive to take kindness undercover in schools as a way to increase its presence, but many of the kind acts in our society occur on a small level: paying for another person's coffee, picking up a piece of trash, and opening a door for someone. We want to teach kids to identify opportunities to be kind, and that sometimes the most fun and rewarding kind acts are the simple ones. We are trying to teach them that by looking for ways to be kind they can change their school and they can change the world.

When Secret Kindness Agents were asked what they have learned about kindness after being in the group they said:

- "This taught me that kindness never takes a day off and how kindness is super important and can turn someone's day around. I'm very proud to be a member of the kindness agent group"- 4th grader
- "When you're kind, it helps other people be kind to everyone else"- 5th grader
- "Kindness brings you closer to others so you can build a better community" - 5th grader
- "I realized that kindness is something you really just don't think about, but now we think about our missions every day"- 5th grader
- "I learned we have the power to make our school and world kinder and safer"- 5th grader
- "Being kind isn't just a 5-second thing and then it goes away. Kindness will always stay with you, it's a lifetime thing" - 4th grader

- We want observers of bullying to be kind: noticing that a student is being harmed, not thinking the behavior is funny, or having a hard time standing up for themselves.
- We want observers to be brave: standing up for that student (e.g., telling the student bullying to stop, not joining in, inviting the student away from the situation, telling a teacher, etc.).
- We want perpetrators of bullying to be kind: stopping and recognizing how their behavior is hurting or has hurt other students.
- We want perpetrators to be brave: stopping themselves, admitting when they were wrong, owning up to their negative behavior, and being willing to find ways to make situations better, etc.
- We want targets of bullying to be kind: recognizing that they do not deserve to be treated this way.
- We want targets of bullying to be brave: standing up for themselves in a safe way (e.g., using assertive communication or telling an adult).

When we look at what ideal responses from students are in these situations, it is easy to see why researchers are beginning to notice that kindness and bravery are a powerful combination. In many situations (e.g., asking a peer to play at recess or sit by them at lunch or asking someone if they need help), we want students to notice and imagine what another is going through as well as have courage to act, support, help, join, and invite. We want them to feel capable of doing this even when it is hard, even when others might judge them, and even when they aren't sure what the outcome will be. These foundational skills, noticing and standing up, involve intentional kind and brave behaviors and must be taught and practiced.

What does the research say?

The research on using kindness and bravery strategies in the classroom is in its infancy. Preliminary research on various kindness programs or curricula indicate that these strategies show promise in areas such as social-emotional development, perception of school climate, peer acceptance, empathy, social competence, and sense of community belonging (Arbour et al., 2009; Layous et al., 2012; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). In one study, students ages 9-11 years old were randomly assigned to either complete and record three kind acts a week or visit three places. Researchers found that students' reports of well-being or happiness increased regardless of which group they were in, but students in the kindness group, showed greater increases in peer acceptance (Layous et al., 2012). Increasing peer acceptance is important because research on bullying has found that students who are more "likable" or accepted by peers (different than perceived popularity), demonstrate more prosocial behaviors, social inclusion, and leadership skills. They are also less likely to be involved in bullying as the perpetrator or victim (Sandstrom & Cillessen, 2006). Research also finds that students are more likely to engage in bullying behaviors in unhealthy school climates (Wang et al., 2013). These and similar results provide evidence that promoting kindness in the classroom can create impactful changes, but research still needs to be conducted to investigate the direct effects of teaching kindness and bravery on reducing bullying behaviors.

Mindset Shift

Like several other practices and philosophies gaining momentum today in education (e.g., Restorative Justice and Trauma Informed Practices), teaching kindness and bravery may also call for a *mindset shift*. However, this may fall under a broader shift in education that is moving away from punitive methods and toward positive alternatives. While there are more concerns with school violence and conversations happening about creating civility in classrooms, creating classrooms that don't focus on not being mean to each other and instead on fostering kind and brave behaviors may be an important part of the solution. Bullying may be another area where we need to change stereotypical thoughts about aggression before we can lay the groundwork for creating kind and brave classrooms. How teachers feel about bullying significantly impacts how students feel and act. While it might seem like your students sometimes care more about lunch than academics, they internalize the climate of the classroom, which is modeled by you. The attitudes you express about bullying are important! Here are a few common myths:

- *Bullying is a normal part of growing up.* As educators, it is easy to equate normal behaviors with common behaviors, but these are not always the same. Bullying is common, but it does not have to be a normal part of childhood and adolescence.
- *He's a bully.* Bullying is a behavior, not a child. Any person is capable of engaging in bullying behaviors, which means that they are also capable of not engaging in bullying behaviors. When we forget that bullying is just a behavior and instead view it as a personal characteristic, we may unintentionally label a child as a bully by our words, actions, or expectations and communicate that they cannot change (Swearer et al., 2009).
- *Is it really that hard to just be nice to each other?!* The answer is surprisingly, yes. We tend to think of caring about others as something that people should just know how to do. However, there are many reasons why students may have difficulty with being kind to others and just like other skills, kindness and bravery need to be taught.
- *I don't have time to teach kindness and bravery on top of everything else I have to teach.* Teaching kindness and bravery can support and compliment the lessons you are already teaching. Research shows that students who are involved in bullying have a difficult time concentrating in the classroom and victims of bullying often skip school (Siebecker & Swearer, 2010). Therefore, fostering kindness and bravery in your classroom is likely to increase achievement. The following strategies are not meant to be used as an additional curriculum, but rather suggest ways to integrate kindness and bravery into your teaching.

This all *sounds* nice, but what can I do?

This article will provide strategies that you can use in your classroom as a Tier I support to foster kindness and bravery, improve the school climate, foster togetherness and community, and ultimately reduce bullying behaviors. These strategies should be used within the context of already existing PBIS or MTSS systems as the focus is on positive behavior.

1. **Model kindness and bravery.**
   Teachers all over the country spend a large part of their day modeling skills. However, when it comes to kindness and bravery, teachers may not be as intentional about modeling these behaviors. Research has found that educators primarily chose punishment including rules and consequences over modeling pro-social behaviors, dialogue, and practice for handling bullying (Stauffer et al., 2012). Here are a few ways that you can intentionally model kindness and bravery to your students:
   - **Be kind to yourself**. For tips on showing kindness to yourself you can go to:

- https://www.teachforamerica.org/teacherpop/teacherpop-road-10-self-care-techniques-teachers
- http://www.mindfulteachers.org/p/self-care-resources.html

- **Be kind to your students.** This one may seem obvious and you may be thinking, "Of course I am kind to my students!" In reality, we aren't always as kind as we could be. Being kind to your students includes having patience; empathizing with their feelings even when they are making bad choices; encouraging them to talk to you; taking reports of bullying seriously; attending school concerts and sporting events (especially look for events your students are involved in that are often less attended, like chess tournaments); demonstrating interest in students' hobbies; dedicating one lunch a week to select a different student to eat lunch with; attending Family Nights; and challenging yourself to learn one new interesting fact about a different student each day.
- **Be kind to other teachers and staff**. Students are watching your actions throughout the day and the way that you treat other staff members is important. Examples: pick up something they dropped; say thank you when they drop something off in your classroom; say hello to staff members who may not be greeted as often (e.g., janitors, secretaries, etc.).

2. Create a kind environment

It is important to set up your classroom environment in a way that fosters kindness and bravery. Here are a few ways to do that:

- **Post definitions, artwork, pictures of kindness and bravery in your classroom.**
- **Create a system for students to nominate their peers for kind and brave acts.** At the end of each week, draw a name and provide age-appropriate rewards.
- **Encourage students to seek help when needed.** Help-seeking is a brave behavior that we want students to engage in whether it is seeking academic, social, or mental health support. You can help students view

seeking support as positive by talking about seeking support as a brave action.

- **Encourage kindness to self.** One part of kindness is being kind to oneself. You can encourage this in yourself by identifying your strengths, viewing making mistakes as a part of learning and growing, modeling managing stress, taking breaks when needed, seeking help, and using positive self-talk.

3. **Teach kindness and bravery**

Kindness and bravery are intentional. Doing kind and brave acts requires noticing others and taking action. Here are a few ways to intentionally teach kindness and bravery:

- **Generate lists of kind and brave acts with your class that can be added to as students find more ways to be kind and brave.** Concrete examples help students have a clear picture of what kindness and bravery look like as well as what their classmates think is kind or brave. This also helps you as an educator know what behaviors you should praise.
- **Share stories and videos of acts of kindness and bravery regularly.** Many teachers already show fun videos in their classrooms to start their day, as a break, or as a reward. Students enjoy and are inspired by interesting videos incorporating kindness and bravery that young people are doing in their communities. The website: www.channelkindness.org features stories and videos of young people showing kindness in their communities.
- **Highlight examples of kindness and bravery within your teaching**. When reading books, talking about history, or analyzing current events, point out examples of kindness and bravery. With older students, you can discuss how a character or person in history could have changed history by showing kindness and bravery. With younger students, it can be as simple as using the words *kind* and *brave* to familiarize them with these words (e.g., pausing when reading a story to say, "Wow that was so kind of Peter to notice John sitting by himself!")
- **Create kindness and bravery challenges**. Kindness and bravery challenges can make kindness and bravery exciting and fun. Creating specific weekly classroom challenges can be a good way to give opportunities for students to practice specific behaviors and feel that you are noticing their efforts. Take time to allow for sharing experiences with the challenges.
- **Create kindness and bravery groups**. Similar to academic skills, some students may need more support to foster kind and brave behaviors. Kindness groups can be a way to incorporate model students to foster leadership in kindness and bravery skills and help students shape the development of these skills.

For specific kindness curricula, ideas for kindness challenges, and more examples on how to incorporate kindness into your lessons visit: https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/

4. **Praise**

Just like any other behavior that we want to reinforce, it is important to praise kind and brave behaviors. It's typically not difficult to tune in when we hear or see negative behaviors happening in the classroom, but we want to tune in to moments of kindness and bravery, catch them being good, and give them specific praise. You may even realize that your classroom is more kind and brave than you thought!

- Younger student praise example: "Marcus, I liked how kind you were to Janie when you saw her crayon broke and shared yours!"
- Older student praise example: "Meghan, I noticed you included a couple of kids who

were sitting alone in your group discussion earlier. I bet it made them feel really important and I am really proud of you!"

5. **Create a classroom community built on inclusion**
   Bullying occurs between in-groups and out-groups or when someone is perceived as different. When a teacher creates a classroom where students are working together for common causes, the entire classroom becomes the in-group. When students feel a sense of community that they created, they are more likely to feel pride in their community.

   - **Set classroom goals and monitor progress.** Many classrooms already set goals together related to academics and learning, but it is also beneficial to develop goals with students regarding kindness and bravery. Students who are involved in the development of their own goals are more likely to follow through on working towards those goals.
   - **Have regular classroom meetings**. This idea is based on the evidence-based approach, Responsive Classroom: https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/. Another resource for beginning regular classroom meetings is https://www.edutopia.org/blog/morning-meeting-changing-classroom-culture-lisa-dabbs.
   - **Promote community involvement or volunteerism.**
   - **Have students identify others' strengths.** Students draw a classmate's name at the beginning of each week and at the end of the week are to write 3 strengths of that classmate on a notecard without their name. Tell students that if they get a name of someone they do not know very well, it is their mission to get to know that person better and identify their strengths.

   - **Promote unity.** There are many ways that teachers can promote feelings of closeness and togetherness. Several ideas include: creating a class chant, motto, mascot, dance move, or classroom traditions.

Even if a teacher used all of these recommendations and created an ideal classroom built on kindness and bravery, there will be students who need more support. We recognize that this may just be a piece of the ever-changing puzzle, but propose that it is a crucial piece. Educators at every level and in all classrooms play one of the most important roles in every child's life and may be the primary or only positive adult in some students' lives. Through your attitudes, words, actions, and the communities you create, you have the power to create classrooms which encourage young people to be kinder and braver, notice others, stand up for those around them, and make a positive impact on this world. You can create an environment of kindness and bravery in your classroom that you want your students to create in society.

A Foundation with a Kindness and Bravery Mission

Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation's mission is to create a kinder and bravery world and their staff and researchers have been engaged in research on these important values with the goal to spread kindness and bravery in our homes, schools, and communities. Some resources from Born This Way Foundation are:

Website: www.bornthisway.foundation

Tips on bullying prevention and intervention: https://bornthisway.foundation/bullying-prevention-intervention-tips/

Channel Kindness Reporters: https://bornthisway.foundation/introducing-2018-channel-kindness-reporters/

Additional Online Resources

http://character.org/

http://kindness-is-contagious.com/

http://ripplekindness.org/

http://www.projectkindness.org/index.html

https://cehs.unl.edu/empowerment/

https://www.channelkindness.org/

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Bully Prevention Training:
State Requirements and Legal Implications

By Chad A. Rose

When you hear the word bullying, I'm positive that it evokes some type of emotional response. Whether you have witnessed, engaged in, or experienced bullying, I'm confident that you have developed an opinion of bullying that includes a definition and a characterization of those involved. I have studied bullying for more than a decade, and dedicated my career to establishing bully-free educational environments. Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to visit schools, work with students, speak with parents, community members, teachers, and administrators, and inform legislators. While I have been struck by the stories of tragedy and triumph, one message has remained relatively consistent: We must reduce bullying within our nation's schools.

As you probably know, bullying is multifaceted and complex, and involvement has been linked to detrimental short- and long-term outcomes. These outcomes, and the overall prevalence of bullying, have led to increased coverage in mainstream media, storylines in popular culture, and the development of advocacy groups. Most importantly, these outcomes and exposure have resulted in increased bully prevention efforts within the nation's schools, and the development of policy and legislation designed to reduce school-based bullying. For example, the

Photo by Sebastian Pichler on Unsplash

National Center for Educational Statistics (Musu-Gillette et al., 2018) reported that the rates of bullying have significantly decreased in the past decade. While this report, and subsequent mainstream media headlines, received a lot of attention, closer inspection of the report reveals that more than 1 in 5 students still report high levels of bully victimization at school. In my opinion, the media reports should have read "Work Still Needs to be Done to Prevent Bullying in Our Schools" instead of "New Data Show a Decline in School-based Bullying" (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The question that I'm sure you are asking is, "what else can be done to prevent bullying?" While I could outline school-based prevention approaches, ranging from school-wide social and emotional learning to targeted social skills instruction, for the readership of *ReThinking Behavior*, I believe that it would be most germane to discuss the teacher training component, as outlined by state-level legislation. Specifically, all 50 states and Washington, D.C. have adopted bully prevention legislation, and all but eight states have established model policies (see www.stopbullying.gov for more information). However, not all states outline specific requirements for teacher training.

My team, the Mizzou Ed Bully Prevention Lab, and I have spent the last couple of months reviewing state laws to evaluate, among other components, state-level training requirements. In our evaluation, we have determined that 65% (33) of states, including Washington, D.C., have language specific to awareness or prevention training. Among these states 97% (32) refer to teacher training, 97% (32) staff (including paraprofessionals and bus drivers), 91% (30) administrators, 52% (17) volunteers, 24% (8) student, and 9% parent trainings.

While training is an important step in bully prevention, the language and requirements regarding bully prevention training has wide variation between the states. For example, Florida's House Bill 669 reads,

. . . the National Center for Educational Statistics (Musu-Gillette et al., 2018) reported that the rates of bullying have significantly decreased in the past decade.

> The school district policy must contain, at minimum, the following components: … A procedure for providing instruction to students, parents, teachers, school administrators, counseling staff, and school volunteers on identifying, preventing, and responding to bullying or harassment.

Similarly, Missouri's House Bill 1583 reads,

> Each district's antibullying policy shall be included in the student handbook and shall require, at a minimum, the following components: … A process for discussing the district's antibullying policy with students and training school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students in the requirements of the policy, including at a minimum, the following statements: (a) The school district shall provide information and appropriate training to the school district staff who have significant contact with students regarding the policy; (c) The school district shall provide education and information to students regarding bullying…

Arguably, the most comprehensive bully prevention law is from Massachusetts, which reads,

> The plan for a school district, charter school, approved private day or residential school and collaborative school shall include a provision for ongoing professional development to build the skills of all staff members, including, but

not limited to, educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities and paraprofessionals, to prevent, identify and respond to bullying.

The reason that I highlight Massachusetts law is due to the emphasis on *ongoing professional development*. In my assessment, this is a critical component of teacher training, because we know that single, or annual, training approaches are largely ineffective at changing perceptions and behaviors. Therefore, as schools begin to consider their training approaches, I offer the following recommendations:

- Establish an ongoing collaborative relationship with a bully prevention professional who can offer applied, research based strategies that can be implemented within your school or district.
- Establish a school- or district-wide data collection system that will allow you to examine the prevalence of bullying, in order to establish system-wide and targeted interventions. It also may be advantageous to establish a district- or school-level bully prevention team that is tasked with reviewing data and making programmatic recommendations.
- Ensure that trainings include information on the complexity of bullying, including definition and types of bullying, recognizing bullying, intersectionality, individual and environmental risk characteristics, warning signs, and legal requirements.
- Trainings should also include evidence based strategies for addressing and preventing bullying, including school-wide, targeted, and individual approaches.
- Most importantly, trainings should include reporting and response protocol, where trainees are informed on the process for making a report, responding to reports or observed bullying, report investigation protocol, and how students are supported at the time of the report, during the investigation, and following the conclusion of the investigation.

It is clear that bullying has a detrimental impact on the lives of our youth, and I'm confident that we all believe that students have the right to attend school in a bully-free environment. State legislators have taken steps to adopt bully prevention legislation, however, it is the obligation of the district to ensure that these legislative efforts are implemented in a way that positively impacts the lives of youth. In my opinion, the first step to reducing bullying in schools is to provide teachers, administrators, and school support staff with training, and ongoing professional development, so they are adequately prepared to recognize, report, and respond to student-level bullying.

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Podcast Pulse

By Marc Benedetto

This edition of Podcast Pulse focuses on the topic of Restorative Justice (RJ). The goal of RJ is to build a positive school community and to manage conflicts by repairing harm, building relationships while still holding students accountable for their actions. We have chosen to focus on RJ because the traditional school discipline model is punitive in nature and hinders the education of the most disadvantaged students. Hopefully this information will assist you in the implementation of RJ.

Restorative Justice in School: An Overview (2/18/18, 1 hour 9 minutes)

https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/restorative-justice-overview/

"A student threw a chair at a teacher." This begins Jennifer Gonzalez's podcast on RJ.

Gonzalez, a former middle school language arts teacher, is currently the Editor in Chief of *Cult of Pedagogy*, a website committed to making teacher nerds (someone who can't stop talking about teaching, even during happy hour) more awesome in the classroom. In this podcast she interviews Victor Small, a middle school administrator in Oakland, California, who initiated the use of restorative practices with teachers and students in his school. Gonzalez and Small discuss what RJ is and several of the practices teachers can use to build relationships and understand misbehavior. This is an engaging, informative, and easy-to-listen-to discussion for teachers interested in and wanting to start using RJ as well as for teachers using RJ and looking to refresh their thoughts and practices.

A Whole School Approach to Behavior Issues

(8/29/17, 20 minutes)

https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2017/08/29/a-whole-school-approach-to-behavior-issues/

Katrina Schwartz hosts this episode of KQED's Mindshift education podcast, which focuses on a school that needed and succeeded in accomplishing its own mind shift. She interviews Michael Essien, an administrator at Martin Luther King, Jr. Academic Middle School in San Francisco. When Essien came to MLK two years ago there was very little teaching occurring due to the large amount of problem behavior. He shares several things he tried that did not work, his "ah ha" moment, and the school's push-in system that is building relationships between students and support staff and allowing teachers to teach. In this interesting podcast, teachers, staff, and students share their reactions to this change.

Courage to Change: What It Takes to Shift to Restorative Discipline

(10/23/17, 22 minutes)

https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2017/10/23/courage-to-change-what-it-takes-to-shift-to-restorative-discipline/

In this second Mindshift podcast, also hosted by Katrina Schwartz, the focus is on two charter schools that have been following the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP). KIPP is designed to prepare students for college, but also endorses strict discipline and classroom management practices.

After using KIPP, faculty, staff, and administrators realized that their students were not building social and emotional skills so both schools looked to RJ. The podcast shares the journeys of these two schools, one that has made the transition to RJ and the other just beginning to make the switch.

The previous two podcasts are from Mindshift, a website associated with KQED National Public Radio in the San Francisco area. The site, established in 2010, explores many aspects of education, teaching, and learning. I highly recommend you visit Mindshift. While not a podcast, I'd like to share this article, *Setting School Culture with Social and Emotional Learning Routines*, posted on the Mindshift Teaching Strategies section. The article explores social and emotional learning in elementary and secondary settings with several brief embedded videos and links to other resources.

https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2018/01/16/setting-school-culture-with-social-and-emotional-learning-routines/

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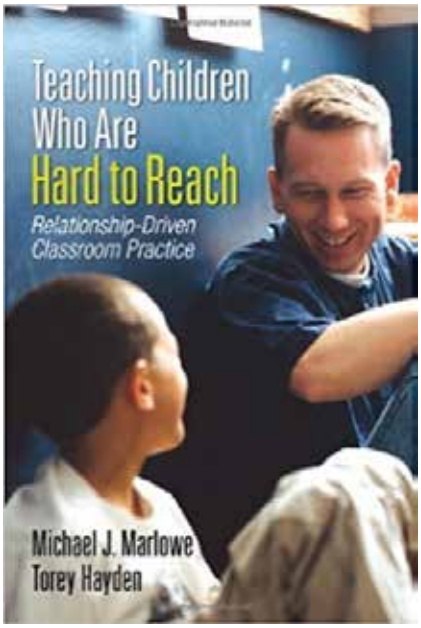
Books

Teaching Children Who Are Hard to Reach, Relationship-Driven Classroom Practice

Reviewed by Felicity Balluch

It is impossible for me, in the scope of this article, to highlight the invaluable information I found in this book.

All teachers at one point or another throughout their teaching careers will be faced with a difficult situation in which a relationship can make all the difference. In working with students who display challenging behaviors, a well-developed relationship can mean the difference between a black eye or a simple barrage of cuss words that bounce blaringly off the ear drum. It can mean the difference between a completed assignment and a destroyed classroom. Simply put, a relationship can result in a smooth unfolding of events, situations which allow us to travel the path of least resistance.



It should be no mystery to us, as educators, that forming emotional connections with our students is what allows us to connect with resistant children, what allows us to become intuitive, and what helps to support change in a student's behavior. Yet, with heaping piles of demand being placed upon the shoulders of those who teach, one could question whether the value of personal relationships is being threatened. As a teacher who places

relationships before a test score, a homework assignment, or a forgotten pencil, I turned to an author best known for the relationships she has built with even the most difficult of students, Torey Hayden. It was in reading *Teaching Children Who Are Hard to Reach Relationship-Driven Classroom Practice* by Torey Hayden and Michael J. Marlowe (2012) that I hoped to obtain a glimpse into the principles needed in order to build and maintain a relationship-driven classroom.

In the preface, the reader quickly learns that Hayden discovered the importance of relationships while working as an aide in a preschool program for children who are disadvantaged. She was asked to work with a 4-year-old who did not speak, had a fear of men, and spent her day hiding beneath a piano. Hayden was asked to get the girl to come out. Rather than pushing the issue and focusing on the idea of coming out from under the piano, Hayden spent months building a relationship with the young girl by crawling under the piano, talking, and reading to the girl. Eventually the young lady began to talk again and soon came out from her hiding place. This first relationship was followed by several others that taught Hayden the power of relationships.

It was these experiences that gave Hayden powerful insights into the power of relationships. Thus, Hayden's approach to teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders revolves around human interaction. She has approached each student individually and recognizes the unique characteristics of each interaction, many of which she highlights in this book. It is these insights offered by Hayden that will be useful to both general and special education teachers in their efforts to understand and teach students who are resistant or hard to reach.

In the beginning of this book, Hayden and Marlowe describe the relationship-driven classroom model as one that focuses on the importance of social interaction rather than obedience. In this model, social interactions generate appropriate behavior. Inappropriate behaviors are viewed as teaching opportunities with an emphasis on functional behavior. Problems in this model are co-owned with the teacher and student working together on the same team to combat unwanted behavior. In order for true change to happen, relationships and commitment on behalf of both parties are necessary. Responsibility for change is shared, which is a paradigm shift from the typical thinking that plagues many classrooms. We, as educators, often instruct our students to "own" their behavior, that they are the ones solely responsible for behavior choices. Change in the relationship-driven classroom model is present oriented. This means that the relationships we form with students happen only in the present because we cannot change the past or the future. We can only change what is happening right now.

Hayden and Marlowe go on to discuss other models such as control-driven, behavioral, market or business, and the medical model and how each is not necessarily a good fit for students with behavioral needs. They discuss the importance of focusing on process orientation rather than being goal oriented in our behavior approaches simply because there is much value in focusing on the process of making change rather than what lies at the end of our hard work. Skills needed to develop a relationship-driven classroom include self-awareness, objectivity, and acceptance. All are critical for creating strong and healthy bonds necessary for effectively using relationships as a medium of behavioral change. Additionally, seven philosophical principles are the cornerstone for all action that the authors believe should take place in the classroom and are discussed at length.

Hayden and Marlowe also discuss discipline, creating a positive classroom climate, relationship skills, preparing the child for successful peer relationships, and successful group dynamics. It is impossible for me, in the scope of this article, to highlight the invaluable information I found in this

book. It is easy to look at our efforts in a classroom and say, "Sure, I have a great relationship with my students." I, too, am guilty of saying this out loud and finding comfort in the statement. Upon reading this book, I quickly learned that relationships go far beyond how I simply feel. They require commitment, a dance between my student and I as well as the company that surrounds us. Relationships involve every element of an interaction and a deep understanding with threads woven far beyond that which the eye can see. In reading this book, I have begun to uncover these threads hidden deep within the folds of the relationships I have built. This book is a powerful tool in the hands of educators, in that it will allow us to strengthen our game, will force us to reflect and make change, and will help facilitate an ability to make a difference in the lives of our students just as we all set out to do from the time we took our very first step in the direction of a classroom.

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Film

Photo by Geralt on Pixabay

Paper Tigers Film Review

By Barbara Jessing

Paper Tigers is a 2015 documentary directed by James Redford set in an alternative high school in Walla Walla, Washington. In the opening scenes, with clips of video shot by students, we glimpse an environment of chaos, anger, and violence. Students disrupt classes, swear at one another and their teachers, and throw chairs. It gives us an idea of what Principal Jim Sporleder saw when he took over leadership of the troubled school. These are the kids, he says, who are labeled, are called bad kids, are met with discouragement and despair by the adults in their lives; who will end up on welfare or in jail. "When I walked in, "recalls Sporleder, "It was the most out of control environment I had ever seen."

Paper Tigers is the story of how the staff of this alternative school completely changed their view of their students and staged an astonishing turnaround over several years. The story follows the lives of six students through one school year – Steven, Dianna, Kelsey, Eternity, Aron and Gustavo – and focuses on several key staff in the school – the

English teacher, science teacher, behavior specialist, in-school suspension coordinator, school physician, therapist, and principal.

For Sporleder, the turning point was an invitation to attend a conference about the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study, a public health study that documents the devastating and lifelong legacy of toxic stress in childhood. The study describes how toxic stress paves the way for mental health and substance abuse problems, academic failure, criminal offenses, and even physical health consequences. The keynote speaker at the conference gave Sporleder the language of complex trauma and its effect on the brain. He returned to Lincoln High School with a new lens through which to see his students - no longer the bad kids, the failures, the kids we throw away. He confessed that he wasn't sure he could turn the school around. "It's difficult work. We are trying to create change at 16, 17, and 18, that should have been dealt with when they were 5, 6, or 7 years old." There isn't a curriculum for taking the theories of ACE and complex trauma and putting it into practice, but this film is the story of how Sporleder led his staff to learn, explore, and apply these lessons.

Sporleder recounts a confrontation with Steven, on a day when he brought a cigarette lighter to school and refused to give it up. Steven exploded in profanity and left school. Before his return on the next day, Sporleder learned something about Steven. His mentally ill mother had abruptly abandoned the family. That was the subtext of his angry and rebellious behavior. When Steven returned the next day, Sporleder greeted him with compassion: "I am so sorry about your mother". Steven later reflected, "After that, Sporleder wasn't only a discipline figure in my life but someone to talk to if a problem was bothering me." As we learn in the film, the other dramatic finding of the ACE Study is the story of resilience. All the risk factors for adverse childhood experiences can be offset by one thing: the presence of one stable caring adult in that child's life. And that is what the staff strived to become in the lives of these students, building relationships of care and concern. Gradually, school became a safe place where students felt cared about and where their unique skills and talents were allowed expression.

There is no magic in this approach. The film does not shy away from how difficult this work was for students, nor how wearing it is was for staff. The school year was a roller coaster. Kids relapsed, faltered on the brink of success, disappeared, and came back. Yet six stories unfold, in a tenuous but positive direction. Three years into the experiment, Lincoln High School was seeing huge changes: 60% decrease in office referrals; 75% decrease in fighting, 90% decrease in suspensions; a 55% increase in math achievement; a five-fold increase in graduation rates; and a three-fold increase in college admissions.

For those of us challenged to see the vulnerable young person behind the angry, withdrawn, or avoidant exterior, *Paper Tigers* is a story of hope and persistence. Viewers will certainly be reminded of students they have known, and will likely see some dedicated teachers who might remind them of someone they know… or of themselves.

Visit the *Paper Tigers* website, http://kpjrfilms.co/paper-tigers, for more info and to obtain this video from KPRJ Films. *Paper Tigers* is also available on Amazon Video, Vudu, and You Tube and can be viewed for free with your Amazon Prime membership.

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Truisms of Teachers of Students with Behavioral Needs

Photo curtesy of Caleb Woods at Unsplash

By Thomas McIntyre

When professionals of any line of work perform in high-pressure environments, they develop unique forms of professional humor. These lighten difficult times and promote comradery among those specialized groups of professionals. Humor is dependent on embellishment and exaggeration. Here we have a bit of fun with ourselves, our students, and colleagues with no disparagement intended.

- Your worst behaved student will have a perfect attendance record.
- Your soon-to-arrive new student will be likened to "behavioral popcorn": You know he's going to explode, you just don't know when.
- When the professional development presenter mentions the *fight, flight, or freeze* response, you will think of a fourth one displayed by your students - *Freak out!*
- Determining the function of some behaviors is like trying to smell the fifth color of the alphabet.
- If it's true that *you are what you eat*, you have three kids in the front row who are boogers.
- Any behavior management book offering sure-fire or quick-fix strategies should be filed under fiction.
- When a student states that s/he comes from *the street,* it ain't Sesame Street.
- Given extensive, expensive, and intensive professional development in evidence-based practices, and implementation of expansive supports to maintain fidelity to the new interventions, tenured teachers will do as they damn well please.
- Any positive prosocial behavior you have instilled in a difficult student will disappear over the holiday break.
- Convincing an authoritarian administrator to consider positive practices will be akin to trying to ski through a revolving door. You can see your goal, but it ain't gonna be easy getting there.
- If the lesson observation goes well, your class size will be increased, thus proving that no good act goes unpunished.

- While your fidelity to the DRL program has reduced the utterance of the F-word from 103 to 6 times per week, all 6 times will occur during your lesson observation.

- Upon hearing the snickers and seeing your students point at the board, you will turn around to see that in your haste to write "Pencils only. Use of a pen is not allowed**.**", you forgot to place a space between "pen" and "is".

- Given the level of flatulence emanating from Henry, the science teacher will suggest to the IEP team that he be labeled a level 3 biohazard**.** The team will change his label from "disorder" to "dis-odor."

- When informed that the student with ODD is being included into his Gen Ed classroom, the teacher's face will resemble that of someone who just ate a bad clam.

- Upon reading the psychologist's report, you will ponder whether to complete a referral form on him or call the police.

- When we punish kids *for their own good*, it is the disciplinary equivalent of administering Robitussin cough syrup. We tell them it's good for them, but it leaves a nasty taste in their mouths.

- If the teaching staff has developed a thoughtful, positive, and effective school-wide discipline plan, getting district approval will be like mating elephants: it's done at a very high level; it involves a great deal of bellowing and screaming; and it takes two years to get results. (And sometimes you're crushed by the results.)

- Despite implementation of expensive and complex comprehensive systems for teaching peer mediation, conflict resolution, and anger management, the best method for resolving disputes will still be *rock, paper, scissors.*

Photo curtesy of Ben White at Unsplash

- Your paraprofessional will inadvertently sabotage your intervention plan when he mistakenly assumes that "negative reinforcement" means that he should reward bad behavior.

- Pleased with your class' quick and quiet exit during a fire drill, you will later have to explain to the district superintendent why you took your students outside for the tornado drill.

- When your most troublesome student is finally moved to a more appropriate setting, the behavior of the student who replaces him will be 10 times worse.

- And the most important truism of all: You make a difference in the lives of unfortunate kids. *Thank you.*

Thomas McIntyre, Hunter College, City University of New York, tmcintyr@hunter.cuny.edu

Overly Honest IEPs

Admit it: we're all guilty of using parent-friendly language in our IEPs.
What would IEPs look like if we used overly honest language to describe the day-to-day job?
Check out these IEP translations.

IEP Quote: As an accommodation, Josie will be offered chew sticks and other occupational therapy devices to assist her in managing her sensory needs.

Translation: I hope you washed your hands, because if it's in our classroom, it's been in Josie's mouth. The class gerbil has first-hand experience

IEP Quote: The intervention was implemented with partial fidelity.

Translation: We tried to put the behavior plan in place, but between Thanksgiving, winter break, and both paras getting the flu, we couldn't get it going until January.

IEP Quote: Alex will use respectful language during 80% of his day across 3 data days by April 28, 2018.

Translation: Alex has a legendary repertoire of colorful language, and it's hard to keep a straight face when he uses his curse words incorrectly. We're working on channeling his – *ahem* – creativity in a more productive manner.

IEP Quote: Data for the functional behavior assessment was available on 7 out of 18 days in March.

Translation: I admit it – when Jamie runs from the room, the last thing on my mind is filling out the behavior log. I need to make sure she's safe!

Have an Overly Honest IEP Quote of your own?
Submit it to rethinkingbehavior@mslbd.org!

Congratulations to the 2018 Recipients of the MSLBD Awards and Recognitions

Outstanding Leadership Award

Dr. Antonis Katsiyannis, Clemson University, South Carolina, a longtime member of the MSLBD planning committee.

This award honors an individual who has exhibited outstanding service and leadership to the field of behavior disorders on a national level.

Outstanding Educator Award

Janet Burgess, Northgate Middle School, North Kansas City School District.

This award honors an individual who has exhibited outstanding achievement and excellence in classroom service to students with emotional/behavioral disorders and/or autism spectrum disorders.

Building Bridges Award

Vince Thompson, Claire Slama, Rebecca Townlain, Raina Martin, and Courtney Blackwell (not pictured), Child and Family Support Process, Columbia Public Schools, Columbia, Missouri.

The Building Bridges Award honors an exemplary program serving students with behavioral needs and provides seed money for program development.

Graduate Stipends

Sara Sanders, Kansas State University, Leslie Bross, University of Kansas, with MSLBD President Jason Travis, and Jennifer Counts, Clemson University (not pictured).

Graduate stipends honor outstanding students pursuing Doctoral or Masters degrees in special education with an emphasis in behavior disorders or a closely related field.

The keynote session for the February 2018 Midwest Symposium included four TED talk-like 15 minute presentations on the importance of relationships in working with children and youth with behavioral needs. Additionally an "Ignite" session was held consisting of a variety of short talks, stories and information about kids and careers. Video recordings of these individual sessions are now available on the MSLBD website at: http://mslbd.org/what-we-do/video-recordings/

CALL FOR ACTION

Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the U.S. Released February 28, 2018

An interdisciplinary group of 19 school violence experts developed a joint statement on gun violence which has been endorsed by the Midwest Symposium for Leadership in Behavior Disorders. It outlines a public health approach to protect students and adults from gun violence. This statement identifies an 8-point plan involving three levels of prevention, including a recommendation for a national requirement that all schools assess school climate and maintain safe environments that protect all students and adults. Endorsed by 58 national organizations representing 5 million professionals.

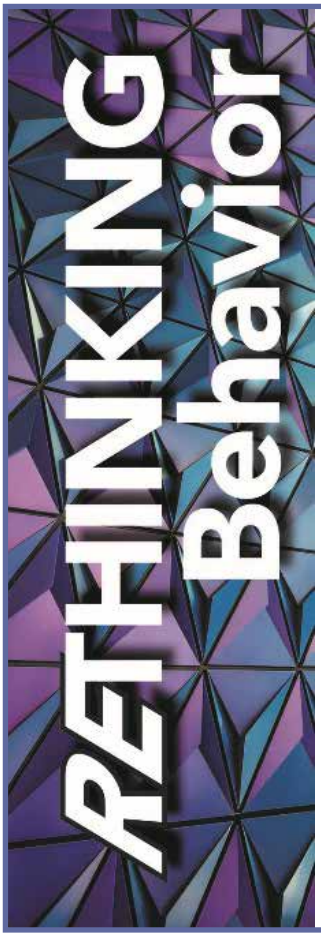
You can read the full statement here:

https://curry.virginia.edu/sites/default/files/projects/Call%20for%20Action%20FINAL%20DRAFT%20for%20DISSEMINATION%202-28-18%20942pm%20(2).pdf

You can sign on either as an individual or as an organization at the links below:

Individual Sign on in support of this statement:
https://ucsbeducation.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bOCrbVQjDZugOsl

Organizational sign on in support of this statement:
https://ucsbeducation.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3wI9T07SB0iPq61



RETHINKING Behavior is a free online magazine for professionals serving children and youth with behavioral needs published three times per year by the Midwest Symposium for Leadership in Behavior Disorders. Access RETHINKING Behavior at: www.mslbd.org/RTB.html.

Our goals are to:

- Lend support and affirmation;
- Provide thoughtful and simulating discussion;
- Provide a source of analysis and commentary;
- Provide current news and information;
- Present personal stories and perspectives;
- Provide unique information; and
- Offer humor, parody, and fiction.

What are you thinking?

What do you like? What should we add?

What do you take issue with? Agree with?

Did we make you think? Smile?

Send thoughts or a proposal to rethinkingbehavior@mslbd.org.

Tell us on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/mslbd1/ or on Twitter at @MSLBD1 and search #rethinkingbehavior.