

Bullies and Cyberbullies

Problems related to bullying via electronic devices are becoming more common and more visible on campuses. Some students use computers or personal devices during their free time at home to bully teachers and administrators and students on a campus. Is this type of “private” bullying by students allowed? Some students and parents in the following case study apparently believe that the answer to that question is yes, but where does harmless venting end and hurtful bullying begin?

This case study also considers the bullying of educators by parents, the flipped classroom, and the relationship between military installations and public school districts.

THE CASE

This year the educators at Truman Avenue High School (TAHS) introduced a new approach regarding students bringing their personal electronic devices to school. With the approval of the school board, the TAHS Academic Committee—made up of administrators, teachers, and students—added the following policy to the Student Code of Conduct (SCOC) and the student handbook:

Each student is encouraged to bring to school an electronic tablet, computer notebook, phone with Internet capabilities, or other personal electronic device with Internet capabilities, for the sole purpose of using the device as an instructional aid. All students and their parents must submit documentation (TAHS Electronic Device Policy Form) showing that they understand the rules of having and using an electronic device on campus for learning and that they

understand the consequences if this privilege is abused. Consequences for the inappropriate use of an electronic device can include revocation of the privilege of bringing electronic devices to school, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or any other disciplinary measure that aligns with the Student Code of Conduct.

Many teachers and students were enthusiastic about this policy change because now students would have easier access to the Internet for research, could use various kinds of digital learning applications, and would be more motivated to pay attention in class. The administrators and many parents were uneasy, however. They worried that expensive electronic devices (EDs) might be stolen, that some parents could not afford to equip their children with EDs for school, and that SCOC violations might increase. In any case, the new policy was in effect, and its ramifications would soon be known. The policy's proponents suggested that the best defense against SCOC violations would be to continuously remind students and parents of the consequences involved.

An unfortunate reality was that no professional development course was provided for teachers on how to use the types of EDs that their students would be bringing to class. Some teachers were motivated enough to search the Web to find apps that would enhance classroom instruction and student learning. Those who had no desire or motivation to use the EDs without first receiving a professional development course about them decided not to incorporate EDs into their lesson plans. The TAHS administrators supported the teachers in making their own decisions and asked the central office to offer professional development courses throughout the school year on how to use EDs as instructional tools in the classroom.

Captain and Mrs. Jordan

Mrs. Jordan started her teaching career in another state, but because her husband's army career has meant frequent moves, she has taught English classes in five different Department of Defense schools within the ten years that she has been teaching. She was pleased to come to TAHS a year ago, because teaching at a public school would be a change of pace for her. She embraced the opportunity to work with both the nonmilitary students and families who live in Truman's attendance zone and local military students and families who are associated with her husband's battalion. She has always felt an especially strong connection with the families she sees, not only at school but at military functions.

Now in her second year at Truman, Mrs. Jordan is excited about the school district's new policy on EDs. She feels confident about incorporating the Internet and other computer devices into her teaching methods, and

she already knows which educational apps she will use to help her students to grasp the English curriculum. She was excited to flip her classroom and apply the tenets of the flipped classroom to all the courses she teaches. The flipped classroom would allow so much more student-directed learning during class time, which would help them to understand concepts quicker and, hopefully, enjoy English more.

Her husband, Captain Jordan, is in an engineer battalion, and both he and his executive officer, Major Laurel, and his battalion commander, Colonel Oliver, have children enrolled at TAHS. In fact, the colonel's son Ty and the post commander General Ames's son Chris are best friends and are in Mrs. Jordan's sophomore English class this year.

Captain and Mrs. Jordan are the epitome of a military couple: He is a graduate of United States Military Academy, and she volunteers every chance she gets. The captain was first in his class at West Point, and his dedication to the military is evident in his Officer Evaluation Reports, which have always given him a rating of "1," or excellent. Additionally, he recently made the recommendation list for promotion to major, ensuring that he will have a long career in the military. It is even rumored that Captain Jordan will be general one day, because of his and his wife's commitment to the army.

The Digital Debacle

As the school year progressed, only a few minor issues arose involving student use of electronic devices in the classroom, and the two thefts that were reported were quickly solved when lockers were searched. Overall, the teachers were happy with the new policy on EDs. Mrs. Jordan was one teacher who was having great success with having her students use the EDs as instructional tools. In general, her students followed her lead and respected her classroom rules.

She changed all her classes to flipped classes, which meant that she created videos of her lecturing and different images of topics that students were learning for a given week and uploaded those to a shared site for the students to access. Then, during class, she made sure that the students were involved with application-based activities to ensure that the students could practice what they studied the night before. For example, during the unit on literary elements, Mrs. Jordan created several videos that showed the different literary elements that could be found in literature. She also created an electronic binder with handouts, skills lessons, and short stories that her students could access at home to prepare for the next day. During class time, students worked collaboratively on group activities that focused on the videos and learning that happened the night before. This flipped idea was really working for her students, and she was so excited to see her students become successful in their learning.

However, Mrs. Jordan did notice that Ty and Chris were being more talkative in class, and they sometimes disregarded her established rules: specifically when they were using their EDs. In one incident, the two boys were sitting in the back of the room, talking and laughing about something they were both viewing on Ty's tablet. As Mrs. Jordan was teaching, she asked the boys to put their EDs away and listen to her lecture. They openly ignored her and continued laughing and talking aloud. Mrs. Jordan finished her lesson, directed the other students to start their group work, and then walked over to Ty and Chris. She asked them to step into the hallway with her, and they did. As she started to say something to them, Ty blurted out, "Later, Mrs. Jordan." Chris added, "You know we make our own rules!" Mrs. Jordan was stunned into silence as she watched them walk down the hallway and out the doors toward their cars.

Mrs. Jordan reported the boys to the truancy officer for leaving class without permission, and she notified their parents, making contact with their mothers. The boys were unhappy that their parents had been called, and they skipped the next two days of school, avoiding Mrs. Jordan's class. In fact, they were misbehaving in other classes they had together, and they chose to skip all classes to avoid getting into trouble in them, too.

When the boys came back to school, Mrs. Jordan's class was working on creating literature books, using an educational app. Mrs. Jordan sat down with Ty and Chris as the other students worked and explained the rubric for constructing their books. As she was explaining, Chris stood up and hollered, "This is bullshit! I don't have time for this elementary shit!" Ty chimed in, "Come on, Chris. Let's get out of here!" Both boys packed up their things and began to walk out of the classroom. Mrs. Jordan asked them to stop, and they retorted, "Go f--- yourself," as Ty grabbed his crouch and Chris gestured with his finger. At this, a shaken Mrs. Jordan directed her other students to continue working on their books. After class, she walked down to the assistant principal's office and wrote discipline referrals for Ty and Chris. Then she called their parents to let them know what had occurred during class. She was able to get ahold of the boys' mothers, who were mortified once again and thanked Mrs. Jordan for the information. They also apologized profusely for their sons' actions.

At the end of the day, Mrs. Jordan was finishing up some paperwork in her classroom when General Ames walked in. Immediately, she noticed that he was very upset, and she was startled by his loud and forceful voice. She also noticed that he was not wearing the required nametag, which meant he had not checked in with the front office staff. He bluntly told her that his wife had called him about Chris and that he did not appreciate being bothered at work for something that a teacher should be able to handle. He continued belittling Mrs. Jordan, telling her that she obviously did not have the guts to call him and that was why she had called his wife. He finished by

demanding that she rescind Chris's discipline referral and saying that if she had any future problems with Chris, she should "fuc!#@" deal with them herself and not bother his wife or him again. At that, he turned and walked out without giving Mrs. Jordan a chance to respond.

Mrs. Jordan did not rescind Chris's and Ty's discipline referrals and, despite General Ames's intimidation tactics, she did report the incident with him to the assistant principals (APs). Because Ty and Chris had skipped class, been insubordinate, and used profanity, the APs suspended both boys for three days, and citations (summons) were given for disruption of the educational environment. They also reminded Mrs. Jordan that she could file charges with the school resource officer against General Ames for using profanity and disrupting the educational environment, but she declined. Mrs. Jordan thought that the school's discipline of the boys would be enough. It is possible General Ames violated the trespassing statutes by not signing in at the front office and proceeding into an area reserved for those with implied permission (students, teachers, school employees, and those who have signed in and received permission to proceed).

Later that night, Mrs. Jordan told her husband about the day's events but, before she could finish, he told her he already knew, because Colonel Oliver called him into his office. The colonel said that Captain Jordan needed to talk to his wife about her lack of respect for families with higher rank and that his son Ty was a good boy and could not have done the things Mrs. Jordan had accused him of. Captain Jordan, who did not know why he was being told this information, replied, "My wife is an exceptional educator, and I support her one hundred percent in the decisions she makes on her campus and in her classroom. I don't question her decisions, just as she does not question the decisions I make on my job." However, that was not what the colonel wanted to hear. He told the captain, "Looks like you may have a shorter military career than we thought."

The next morning, Mrs. Jordan decided to withdraw the boys' referrals after all because she and her husband worked so hard as a military couple to earn rank and do well. Never before had they encountered superiors who behaved as the general and the colonel had, and never before had they been bullied and threatened by superiors. She hoped that if she rescinded the referrals, her husband might have an easier time at work.

However, when Mrs. Jordan walked into the APs' office, the APs told her that they had received a tip that Ty and Chris had created a website depicting Mrs. Jordan as a porn star. They had cut and pasted her school picture onto photos of naked women who were doing X-rated sexual acts online. Ty and Chris had texted the website's link to students throughout the campus and had also tweeted and Instagamed the link. The APs wanted Mrs. Jordan to be prepared for questions from students throughout the day, and they offered her the option of going home.

Mrs. Jordan was devastated. She sat down to catch her breath. After a few moments, she stated firmly, "I'm not going anywhere. I did nothing wrong, and as long as you are planning to severely punish them according to the SCOC, I will go teach my classes." The APs promised that they would hand out the SCOC's harshest punishments to the boys.

As Mrs. Jordan walked to her classroom, she heard students whispering, "She got hers!" and "She shouldn't have messed with them!" She even heard the words "slut" and "whore." Distraught, she made it to her classroom and called her husband. Maybe it was time for them to make another army move.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

The following is a brief insight into the issues presented in the case study, with a brief literature review to help give context to those issues.

Electronic Devices in the Classroom

Electronic devices and social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are seemingly ubiquitous and can easily become channels for SCOC or penal code violations when they contain words or pictures that are inappropriate, demeaning, or threatening to others. Additionally, educators need to be aware that some savvy students may torment or retaliate against others by creating a webpage or pages and/or posting tweets that are slanderous or humiliating and are used to bully their targets into submission. Stopping student cyberbullies may seem impossible, especially when they create their propaganda at home and avoid bringing it into the educational environment.

When it comes to using EDs as an instructional tool on campuses, reviews from educators are mixed. For some educators, having EDs in the classroom can be a very good thing. In fact, more and more schools are allowing EDs to be used in the classroom because of the benefits that contribute to student success (Criswell, 2009; Khadaroo, 2012; Foote, 2012; Sun, Martinez, & Seli, 2014). At a high school in Austin, Texas, a librarian implemented the use of iPads and encouraged teachers to start using iPads in the classroom (Foote, 2012). As the teachers began to use the iPads, they found that their students were having fun learning and performing beyond expectations. The use of different educational apps on the iPads allowed the educators to "...facilitate access to information, help kids learn, and empower them" (Foote, p. 33).

The use of technology can make learning accessible from any place. As Kennedy (2012) stated, "Computer-powered devices are making anytime, anywhere learning a reality. They make it easier for learning to continue and be reinforced outside the school walls" (p. 34-35). Better classroom

experiences start with electronic devices because students are able to collaborate on projects and discussion groups that promote more student-driven learning (Raths, 2013). Additionally, students are more creative when they are given the opportunity to use an electronic device and produce a learning product that is not a mobile, poster, or other antiquated medium.

Many educators use EDs in the classroom and have found online communities that serve as support groups in promoting technology in the classroom. Educators can join other educators who use EDs and share in the learning of how those devices can promote successful learning annually during the National Digital Learning Day. This day is set aside for educators to "showcase how technology can improve student outcomes and support teachers," as Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education stated (as cited in Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014).

In contrast, there are issues that some find to outweigh the benefits of allowing EDs in schools. Two regular issues pertain to cost and property management, where a school may need to purchase EDs to ensure equal access to students who may not have the personal capital to purchase an ED (Criswell, 2009). This extra money for purchase does not always include the maintenance or replacement of lost, damaged, or stolen EDs. Additionally, although allowing electronic devices in the classroom is innovative and encourages creativity, there are serious problems that come with this privilege. According to Nworie and Haughton (2008), some problems include

technology supported cheating opportunities; communication-related distractions from emails, instant messaging, computer games, web surfing, and other 'personal projects'; lack of engagement ...; and lately, increasing incidents of bullying and intimidation supported with innovations including the Internet, text messaging, and social network sites. (p. 52)

These problems place even more pressure on educators as they try to encourage student success.

Another issue that EDs bring to the classroom is that it is a recording device. Honawar (2008) found that cell phone use in the classroom has increased the number of videos that students record of teachers singing, dancing, or doing something that will land on the Internet. This fear of recording has affected some students not to participate in class for fear of saying or doing something that will be mocked online. The recording could be elaborated in a webpage designed specifically for the purpose to harm another person. When this happens, defamation could be a result and will deter a successful learning environment for all students.

There must be policies in place that point to the proper and improper use of EDs that are clear and understandable by both students and parents

(Quillen, 2010). A campus-wide policy or classroom expectations on the use of EDs in the school is necessary, as teachers' and students' perceptions of the appropriate use of EDs differ (Baker, Lusk, & Neuhauser, 2012). Students and parents must understand what advantages an ED may involve and the consequences of neglecting to adhere to the policy.

Hence, many districts have implemented guidelines for ED use on campuses. For example:

Rules for the Use of Electronic Devices on Campus

All professional staff using electronic devices (EDs) in the classroom will take these actions:

- participate in professional development courses throughout the school year that focus on the best ways to implement EDs in classroom instruction;
- show and note how EDs will be used when writing lesson plans;
- keep parents informed as to how EDs are being used to enhance instruction and what the benefits are and have been throughout the year;
- inform parents which apps are being used and provide instructions and/or parent class nights on how to use them;
- share ideas and lessons during team learning time, faculty meetings, and professional development sessions;
- enforce the rules and expectations for all when EDs are in use;
- have students and parents sign contracts that describe the classroom expectations and outline the consequences of not abiding by them; photocopies of this signed contract will be sent to the parents and to the assistant principals' office; if both a student and the student's parent refuse to sign, they forfeit the student's right to use EDs in the classroom for instructional purposes; and
- include students who do not have personal EDs available by providing them with school-issued EDs.

All students using EDs in the classroom will do the following:

- use the EDs for educational purposes *only* and not for personal reasons;
- abide by all school and classroom rules concerning EDs;
- if any bullying of others is done through an ED device or if any bullying material is forwarded that affects the learning environment negatively, the following consequences will be administered:
 - the student will be banned from using EDs on campus for a designated amount of time and
 - the student will be disciplined according to the SCOC, which may call for suspension, the issuance of a citation or summons, or a recommendation for placement in a disciplinary alternative education program.

School districts that allow students to use school-issued equipment must be able to keep track of not only the EDs but the websites visited. Many

school districts enforce policies that give them access to both student and employee computers, and when a district finds that its policies have not been followed, they may reprimand the student or employee.

The Flipped Classroom

A flipped class is a delivery of instruction that can be easily implemented in a blended course because it combines online and F2F methods of learning (Jordan, 2012; Kennedy, 2012). It can involve uploading short videos focused on a specific topic to an online learning platform, while allowing F2F time for whole-/small-group discussions and guided practice (Bergmann, Overmyer, & Wilie, 2011). In essence, lecturing and direct teaching occurs online, on a student's own time, while the guided practice or facilitated learning occurs in the F2F classroom with the teacher present. The online learning allows the student to take time learning key concepts and revisiting a video again and again, as needed. It also allows F2F learning to be a time for immediate feedback to occur and questions to be answered in a timelier manner.

Flipping a classroom has many benefits and is ideal for any class since it is

- a means to INCREASE interaction and personalized contact time between students and teachers;
- an environment where students take responsibility for their own learning;
- a class where content is permanently archived for review or remediation; and
- a place where all students can get a personalized education.

(Bergmann et al., 2011, para 3)

Flipped classrooms are not places to substitute teaching with videos, and increase "extra" or "free" time in class (Spencer, Wolf, & Sams, 2011). It is not a tool that replaces effective teaching or time to focus on lower levels of learning, such as surface or declarative learning (Bain, 2004). Instead, flipping a class provides more focused time on student-centered learning.

The biggest benefits of a flipped classroom are the ability for students to learn not only from the teacher but from one another and to help the teacher to learn exactly where a student is excelling and struggling (Flipped Classroom Offers New Learning Path, 2011; Flipping Classrooms, 2011; Hart, 2012). Flipping does away with the need for teachers to spoon-feed students and allows for students to reach the highest levels of Bloom's, learning at their own pace. The F2F class time becomes a place of questioning, higher order thinking, critical thinking, and focused learning. An additional benefit, according to Kahn, from Kahn Academy, is that flipping "humanises" the learning experience for students by removing

the 'one-size-fits-all' lecture from the classroom in favour of a 'self-paced' lecture at home" (as cited in Evans, 2011, p. 4). It allows for more interaction and the personalization of contact time between students and students, and students and teachers. Furthermore, as videos are found on an online platform, they can be archived and viewed again at a different time. This helps those students who missed a F2F class and those who are struggling with a concept (Evans, 2011).

Bullying of Educators

When one thinks about bullying, the image usually includes students bullying other students. However, bullying can occur between teacher and teacher, administrator and teacher, parent and teacher, parent and parent, student and student, student and teacher, and so on. Numerous types of situations could involve a bully, but educators must be aware that a bully could be anyone, and the bullied could be one person or several.

Most state educational and criminal codes recognize bullying between children but not between adults. If a parent bullies another adult on a campus, that behavior might be legally defined as a verbal assault, an assault, a terrorist threat, or retaliation. Parents do have the right to visit a school to talk to teachers, and many state educational and federal codes give parents the leeway to request almost anything. Ultimately, though, it is up to the educator to consider and fulfill or deny a request. Additionally, even a parent who is an army general or the top lawyer in a city cannot force an educator to do anything as long as the educator follows the school board's policies. Administrators must always support educators if a parent intimidates and threatens them for reporting such incidents according to the district's policies.

If an educator feels that the bullying has crossed over to defamation, a legal action may be pursued. "The law of civil defamation says, in effect, that one individual may not harm another's reputation by false statements about his or her character" (McDaniel, 2002, p. 34). Unfortunately, the Internet has made it easier for defamation to occur, and the laws that protect persons against Internet defamation are currently found at the state level. According to Taylor (2002), defamation is "deliberate, false, written or oral communication that injures a person's reputation" and is a problem that is common on school campuses (p. 67). Additionally,

Written defamation is commonly referred to as libel, and spoken defamation is generally referred to as slander; but those plane distinctions are not always precise for legal purpose. It must be false, it must be published, and it must damage or injure a person's reputation, business, or profession. (Taylor, 2002, p. 67)

Defamation can occur when a parent talks about an educator in a false light to others or when students post fabrications and falsehoods on a webpage. Internet speech is protected under the First Amendment; however, if defamation can be proven to follow the definition above, a legal action may be taken.

Computers can also house pictures and videos that can be transmitted over several types of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, The Vine, Kik, Yik Yak, and so on. Would there be liability in possessing or sending out these pictures and videos? Stewart (2013) discussed how the Internet has made it possible and easy for others to repost things that may be seen as defamatory by others. He pointed to the muddy waters that concern posting something on social media and others reposting that same information elsewhere. As there are many cases that point to social media defamation but not one clear case for schools to follow when disciplining students, it is best to seek clarification from the local school board.

Administrators should adhere to guidelines regarding bullying of their educators, such as the following:

- Teachers and other educators should be informed that they have the right to file a police report when they have been threatened, retaliated against, or assaulted by a parent, a student, or anyone else. Of course, they also have the right to file a police report when they have been the victim of any other type of penal code violation, such as the harassment statutes.
- Teachers and other educators should be introduced to and know how to contact the school resource officer or the law enforcement agency with competent jurisdiction, as needed, especially when a penal code or SCOC violation has occurred.
- Teachers and other educators should never be treated as if they deserved or brought any threatening, intimidating, or other inappropriate behavior from another person on themselves.

In an article that focuses on teacher-to-teacher bullying, the following abbreviated steps were offered to help control bullying from one person to another:

- 1 identify bullying behaviors,
- 2 stand up for others,
- 3 stop it at the source, and
- 4 document your experiences. (Anonymous, 2012, p. 69)

To foster an environment of safety and security, educators should work together as a family in protecting themselves and others on campus from

verbal and physical assaults and retaliation for performing their job as the school board dictates.

The laws regarding EDs and bullying are changing regularly, so be diligent in keeping up with the current codes. Administrators must contend with ED use and bullying on campus and must establish and communicate clear expectations and guidelines for teachers, students, and parents. In addition, these expectations and guidelines must be administered uniformly throughout a campus and among all parties. Finally, administrators need to think about the implications of placing staff pictures on their school's website and other personal information, such as a biography that may include family pictures.

NCZ—NO CONSEQUENCE ZONE

Answer the questions below by applying what you know about this case and thinking about the steps you would take if you were faced with this situation or a similar one.

- 1 Bullying by students through the use of EDs is becoming more and more common.
 - a. How does your school district's SCOC and your state's penal code protect educators and others from bullying students who create webpages designed to abuse and humiliate others?
 - b. What elements does your SCOC or parent handbook contain that address the behaviors of parents, specifically using intimidation and profanity against a teacher or administrator? Do revisions need to be made to these documents to further protect the educators in your district?
- 2 Sometimes educators bring their home life to school, or vice versa.
 - a. When a disruption occurs on campus that includes aspects of an educator's personal and professional life, what, if any, are the duties of the administration?
 - b. Discuss examples of home-life and school-life issues. What are some ways to avoid mixing the two?
- 3 The SCOC should clearly outline the district's rules for students and the consequences for violating them. Administrators should ensure that the contents of the SCOC are consistently communicated to all stakeholders, with reminders throughout the year.
 - a. According to your SCOC, what are the options for educators when students walk out of class or skip class?
 - b. What are the options for educators when students use profanity in the classroom and disrupt the learning environment?
- 4 According to the rules stated in your SCOC, what types of consequences should Ty and Chris receive for their actions?

- 5 On many military installations, post or base commanders and battalion commanders encourage their troops to be positive influences in their children's lives. Additionally, the commanders often create partnerships with educators and encourage them to contact the officer in charge or the noncommissioned officer in charge when a troop member's child is not following school rules and policies and the troop member has not been cooperative in addressing the situation. Finally, if military personnel behave in a manner unbecoming of a military person, discipline may be imminent.
 - a. Do students from military families attend schools in your district? If so, does a partnership exist between the local military installation and your school district, and how does it work?
 - b. What types of partnerships have been created with the nonmilitary businesses in your community that encourage a positive relationship between students and educators?
- 6 Now consider some of the effects of bullying on the larger community.
 - a. What are the social and political implications for the educators at TAHS if parents are allowed to intimidate teachers without reprimand?
 - b. How might a situation like the one presented in this case study play out differently in your own community?
- 7 The delivery of instruction has changed throughout the years, and now flipping a classroom has become a popular way to deliver course concepts and objectives.
 - a. Does your school have flipped classrooms? If so, what do they look like?
 - b. What are pros and cons of a flipped classroom, and what type of policy or rules need to be in place for the flipped classroom to work?
 - c. What are learning activities and applications that could be used in a flipped classroom?

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