

Mom Is Too Cool

Parental involvement on a campus can be a great idea when the parents are vetted and are trusted to do what is expected. Parents on campuses are a welcome sight, and their presence is encouraged, especially if student success can be linked to parental visibility. A problem arises when a parent may have been vetted and trusted but violates that trust by unspeakable actions. This one parent may cause such a ripple effect that educators may become overly cautious by decreasing the opportunities for welcoming parents on campus.

Contingency plans should be in place at each campus to help educators follow an approved plan of action to remove from campus parents who violate the school's rules. These plans should also include the help of the school resource officer (SRO), especially if criminal activity is suspected. Unfortunately, trusting all parents to do the right thing by both their own child and the other students on a campus is not always what occurs. As this case presents, one parent can make educators skeptical of all parents.

THE CASE

The Mom: Ms. Julie Hayworth

Ms. Julie Hayworth grew up in Roswell, USA and graduated from Roswell High School (RHS), where her daughter now attends. Ms. Hayworth was the captain of the dance team and salutatorian of her class and earned a full scholarship to a renowned out-of-state university. Her life was perfect, and she could not wait to leave Roswell for "better" things.

During Julie's senior year seventeen years ago, she became pregnant by her longtime boyfriend, Blain. She was so excited about being pregnant,

especially as Blain asked her to marry him—because he thought it was the right thing to do—and take her to Austin, Texas with him; he was going to make it big in the music industry, and Austin seemed to be a great place to try out his dream. Julie immediately vacated her plans to attend the out-of-state university and made plans to move to Texas.

However, when graduation came, Blain's parents told Mr. and Mrs. Hayworth, Julie's parents, that they would help pay for any costs that Julie would have arising from the keeping of her baby, but that Blain would be going to Texas alone. They were not going to allow Julie to ruin their son's life by purposefully becoming pregnant; yet, they wanted to be a part of the baby's life. Blain wanted to go to Austin and knew he was not ready to settle down with a wife and baby. Even though he loved Julie, he was glad that his parents stepped in on his behalf and that he did not have to go through with a marriage.

Devastated, Julie had nowhere to go but to stay at home with her parents and her new baby, which she delivered three weeks after graduation. Because of Blain's initial promise to take her to Texas, Julie had declined her out-of-state university's acceptance to pursue becoming a mother and wife. Julie found herself stuck at home with her parents, who helped raise her daughter as she went to the local community college and then to a local state school.

The Assistant Principal

Dr. Melissa Shoemaker is in her fifth year as an assistant principal at Roswell High School. She has had a very successful career as both a teacher and an assistant principal (AP), mainly because she is perceived to be fair, consistent, and a believer of school board-established policies and rules. Her goal as an educator was to help students and teachers understand that when policies and rules are followed, positive consequences are inevitable. Additionally, she wants students who are about to leave public education and enter adulthood to appreciate, adhere to, and understand how following rules, policies, and laws are a part of taking responsibility and promoting self-worth and growth within a society.

Dr. Shoemaker is respected and is even feared by many students, because although she does take into account an individual student's circumstance, if a rule is broken, negative consequences will follow. For example, a freshman male brought a ten-inch butcher knife to school to use against a bully. His best friend was afraid for him and reported him to Dr. Shoemaker. Immediately, Dr. Shoemaker called for the School Resource Officer (SRO) and requested that he accompany her to the classroom. Both Dr. Shoemaker and the SRO entered the classroom, asked the student to follow them to Dr. Shoemaker's office, and Dr. Shoemaker

proceeded to search for the knife, which she found in the book bag. When asked why he brought the knife, the freshman male confessed that he was being bullied and wanted to take care of the bully once and for all. However, he never notified a teacher, administrator, his parents, or any other adult about the bully. According to both the Student Code of Conduct (SCOC) and the state penal code, the freshman male committed a felony by bringing an illegal knife into a weapon-free school zone. These violations of the SCOC and the penal code landed the student in a disciplinary alternative school.

Yes, Dr. Shoemaker is a good administrator, and she has been a positive addition to RHS. Five years ago, when Dr. Shoemaker came to Roswell, USA, she was not sure she was going to like the small town, as she spent most of her life in large cities and school districts. However, she found that kids are very similar from school to school, and she has grown to love her home in Roswell. She has really enjoyed the collaborative partnerships she has with the teachers and parents, which have made her job an easier and fun one.

However, Dr. Shoemaker found that there are some "helicopter" parents, those who swoop down to "save" their children from responsibility, and a new type of parent: The buddy parent. Dr. Shoemaker had not come across the buddy parent in her years in education but recently found that a handful of parents wanted to be their child's "buddy" more than their parent. This small group of parents were seen as dressing in clothes that high school students would typically wear, wearing makeup/cologne that was too strong, and getting piercings and tattoos in the most noticeable areas on their bodies. They also spoke the same colloquial language as their kids, emulating their high school children as much as possible. This new fad of parenting was alarming to see on campus, but as their numbers were few, Dr. Shoemaker did not expect to have too much trouble with them.

The Buddy Mom and the Party

One particular parent, Ms. Julie Hayworth, has exceeded this definition to the point of behaving more like a teenage best friend to her daughter than like a mom. Ms. Hayworth behaves as if she is a student attending RHS, which is evident in the way she dresses and flirts with the boys. She has a daughter, Cassidy, who is in the ninth grade, a good-natured, respectful, hard-working student. Cassidy is on the junior varsity cheerleading squad, and she is a freshmen representative on the student council. She has enjoyed her freshman year so far and is grateful that she has a supportive mom.

Roswell High is a closed campus, which means that all students are required to eat lunch on campus, and they are not allowed to leave the

campus without permission. For this reason, Ms. Hayworth started coming up to eat lunch, sporadically, with Cassidy about a month ago, but lately she has started to come every day. At first, she would bring lunch to Cassidy and sit with her at a lunch table, just the two of them, throughout the lunch period. As the weeks passed, however, Ms. Hayworth began to eat lunch with Cassidy and her friends. She also started to bring enough food for all of Cassidy's lunch table friends, which included a group of boys who are sophomores and juniors.

The principal divided the student population equally among the four APs, which meant that an AP would take care of all matters concerning the assigned students. As Cassidy was assigned to Dr. Shoemaker, she was charged to speak to Ms. Hayworth whenever an issue arose. While Dr. Shoemaker was on lunch duty, she noticed that Ms. Hayworth was feeding many students with commercial food, so she explained that according to district policy, only outside, bought food for Cassidy was acceptable, and any food for any other child could be accepted only if the parents of the other students wrote a letter stating it was okay for Ms. Hayworth to bring them food at lunchtime. Hence, Ms. Hayworth told Cassidy's friends, if they wanted food brought, they would need to get their parent's to sign a letter stating it was okay to eat food not sold by the school. When Ms. Hayworth had all of the letters gathered, she gave them to Dr. Shoemaker, and there was no longer a problem with her bringing food for all of Cassidy's friends.

However, other curious things were also occurring. First, Ms. Hayworth was not dressing as the professional that many thought she was. She worked with her mother and father at their family accounting firm; hence, she used to come to school in business dress. Lately, though, she had been coming to lunch in provocative clothing, which included tight jeans, see through tops, low-cut tops, very short skirts, and six-inch heels. She also started wearing much more makeup than usual, and she fixed her hair in a style that was commonly worn by the female students.

Second, Ms. Hayworth was no longer eating lunch with Cassidy. She would bring food for Cassidy's friends and even sit at the same table as Cassidy, but she would sit in the middle of the boys, who were very flirtatious with her. This bothered the teachers and administrators on duty, and when Dr. Shoemaker was notified of the inappropriate behavior that was being observed, she asked Ms. Hayworth to come see her in her office.

During the meeting, Dr. Shoemaker thanked Ms. Hayworth for being such a great support of the students and thanked her for her tireless efforts and money in keeping the students fed. She also remarked on Cassidy's success at school, stating that she was impressed with the great progress Cassidy was making with her coursework and with her elective activities. Dr. Shoemaker then let Ms. Hayworth know that she would like to encourage

her to come to lunch; however, if she continued, she would need to sit with Cassidy to show that she is there for her daughter and not other non-familial students. It was also explained that the observations from other teachers and administrators was a bit uneasy and they felt the closeness to the boys was inappropriate. Finally, Ms. Hayworth's dress was spoken of, and Dr. Shoemaker asked Ms. Hayworth to follow the same dress code that is required by the teachers, which aligns more with Ms. Hayworth's business dress attire.

Ms. Hayworth then spoke and stated that she did not realize that she had been such a topic of conversation and that this confrontation embarrassed her. She stated that she is first and foremost at school for Cassidy but that the other kids love and treat her like their own moms, which she admitted to loving, so she obliged their attempts to get closer to her by allowing them to call her their "Buddy Mom." She further explained that the kids wanted her to be a part of the "cool crowd," and that meant to sit in the middle of all of the students, not just the boys. Again, she told of how embarrassed she was and stated that she would not come as often to lunch and would promise to dress in professional dress whenever she came to campus. Both Dr. Shoemaker and Ms. Hayworth concluded the meeting amicably and with the understanding that the lunchtime would no longer be a point of contention or inappropriateness.

The Incident

Weeks had passed since Dr. Shoemaker had seen Ms. Hayworth on campus, and when she checked in on Cassidy, everything seemed back to normal. Cassidy was such a great kid that Dr. Shoemaker felt that she was so well adjusted and happy that she would be able to weather anything that came her way. She even made a point to say hello to Cassidy and ask how her mother was whenever she saw her in the hallways, to which Cassidy always responded, "I'm doing well. My mom is well, too."

When Ms. Hayworth finally did come on campus during lunch, as promised, she dressed professionally and sat next to Cassidy. She also continued to bring Cassidy's friends lunch, but she also started bringing water bottles and snacks to the other kids, which seemed harmless. Dr. Shoemaker and the other educators on duty felt better about the situation, especially as Ms. Hayworth never stayed more than ten minutes and always sat right next to Cassidy.

Dr. Shoemaker had also thought that everything with Cassidy's friends, specifically the boys from her lunch table, was going well. They had not shown any signs of missing Ms. Hayworth, nor did they comment or ask why she did not come to lunch anymore whenever Dr. Shoemaker walked over to their lunch table during lunchtime. Therefore, all seemed very well.

A day in spring changed all of Dr. Shoemaker's insight, however. She had received a call from an angry, concerned parent whose daughter attended a party at Ms. Hayworth's house over the past weekend. The parent stated, "My daughter went over to that whore's house and was served beer. What will you do about this!"

Dr. Shoemaker asked the parent to clarify who the "whore" was and who served the beer. The parent continued,

My daughter says that Ms. Hayworth invited a whole bunch of boys over to her house over the weekend when Cassidy would be visiting her dad. When the boys came over, they brought some girls with them, which included my daughter. They were then told that there was beer and margaritas in the refrigerator and that everyone was welcome to get drunk and stay the night if they couldn't drive home. My daughter sure as hell got drunk and didn't come home until five yesterday morning.

When Dr. Shoemaker asked whether she called the police, the parent stated, "I'm not an idiot! Of course I did, but I also wanted you to know so you could do something too."

The parent then continued,

Did you know that Ms. Hayworth is also bringing alcohol on campus? According to my daughter, she brings it to a group of boys who she eats lunch with, and disguises the alcohol in the water bottles she brings. From what my daughter and her friends are saying, she puts vodka in the water, because it doesn't smell like beer does and it is colorless. She even supplies them with water bottles that are just full of vodka, and no water. AND, the snacks she provides to the kids; have you noticed deformed gummi bears? Those have been soaked in vodka!

Dr. Shoemaker was stunned and could not believe that she had not realized that Ms. Hayworth was possibly bringing alcohol on campus to give to minors. She felt so stupid, especially as she had been purposefully going to the lunch table to check on Cassidy and her friends. She was disappointed in herself but also in Ms. Hayworth.

First, Dr. Shoemaker met with her principal, the other APs, and the two SROs to brief them of what she learned from the angry, concerned parent. She then divulged her plan of action, which included speaking to each student from the lunch table and searching their bags and lockers for the infamous water bottles and gummi bears. The contents would need to be checked to confirm the parent's allegations. The other APs and SROs agreed to help.

After the APs and the SROs conducted their investigations, they found the following information, with some verbatim quotes from the students below:

- 1 Cassidy broke down and cried when she was told of the allegation. She had no knowledge of what her mother was doing and felt betrayed that she had a party with her friends while she was with her dad.
- 2 The boys and some girls from the lunch table, seven total, all confessed that Ms. Hayworth had been bringing them alcohol for almost as long as she had been coming to lunch. They made a promise to Ms. Hayworth that if she bought them alcohol, they would never let Cassidy know. In return, Ms. Hayworth would allow them to go to her house to party when Cassidy was visiting her dad.
- 3 The party last weekend was just one of many parties that Ms. Hayworth had when Cassidy was gone for the weekend. They remember at least five in the fall-winter semester alone, and each party got a little bit raunchier than the next. For example, couples were "hooking up" and having sex in different rooms. Also, when one of the kids asked to bring marijuana to the parties, Ms. Hayworth allowed it, but it could be smoked only on the back patio.
- 4 Ms. Hayworth was becoming more involved with each new party. At first, she played the host, but then she started dressing like a "hooker" and started "...grinding on all of us boys. So, we started grinding back." Three boys admitted to having a sexual encounter with Ms. Hayworth, which they stressed was only fellatio, "...so it wasn't really sex."
- 5 All seven students were supposed to keep the parties a secret. They created a little secret society, but one of the seven had a nosey sister who got drunk last weekend and told her mother all about the party she attended.
- 6 Some of the seven had pictures of the students drinking with Ms. Hayworth at her house. One student even videoed Ms. Hayworth performing fellatio on another, but that student is eighteen, so "the sex was consensual; no harm done."
- 7 During all these confessions, the nosey sister texted her friends that she was in big trouble, and she quickly texted about her weekend experience at Ms. Hayworth's house, which became the fastest-traveled text throughout RHS and the school district.

Dr. Shoemaker was devastated. Where was she to go from here? How did this happen while she thought all was under control? What were the signs that she clearly missed? Together, the APs and SROs took their findings to the principal, and the next steps were laid out.

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.

The Buddy Parent

The buddy parent is one that is permissive but dangerously so. This parent behaves like an undisciplined teenager without consideration to those who may be harmed by the parent's actions. Like Ms. Hayworth, buddy parents are self-destructive, self-absorbed, and conniving. The buddy parent cannot be trusted to volunteer or to come onto the campus without wreaking havoc.

The buddy parent has evolved from the helicopter parent. Educators want parents involved but not so involved that they become helicopter parents or overly involved parents who create a dysfunctional interdependence with their child to the point the child grows up to be that adult child who believes he/she cannot succeed without parental involvement (Manos, 2009). The goal for students on any campus is to become independent and successful with guidance of parents but not full intervention. Parents who are too involved in their children's lives or who over-parent by micromanaging their children's lives have earned the monikers "helicopters, hovercrafts, hummingbirds, stealth fighters, and black hawks" (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011, p. 400). The buddy parent is involved too, but superficially, focusing on his/her needs and desires and on how to meet those needs and desires.

With the widespread use of electronic devices by students, parents have kept their children within reach through "the electronic umbilical cord" (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011, p. 400). This electronic umbilical cord has also allowed parents to keep in contact with other students on a campus. Like Ms. Hayworth, some parents have engaged in inappropriate—and sometimes illegal—relationships with students. The challenge for educators, then, is how to guide parents in helping educators "... in our mutual goal of helping students become engaged learners, competent and creative problem solvers, and responsible and effective citizens—in essence, helping students grow up" (Coburn, 2006, p. 11).

It may be easier to understand parents if we look at types of parenting styles. In LeMoyne and Buchanan's (2011) work, Baumrind's research was presented, where seven types of parenting styles were identified: permissive, authoritarian, authoritative, non-authoritarian directive, democratic, good-enough, and rejecting/neglecting (pp. 401–402).

These parenting styles shed some light on what types of parents may be present on a campus.

So, how do educators work with all types of parents, specifically the buddy parent? Although there is no research on the buddy parent, there is literature on the helicopter parent, which focuses on those who have students at the college level. Although most educators would expect that college students are old enough to navigate through the collegial waters on their own, Cutright (2008) recognized the need for intentional steps

toward working collaboratively with parents. Four of his steps can be adapted at the P-12 level and are presented in part as

- 1 **The Partnership Relationship:** "develop a relationship that is a partnership with the parents and the family." This will help the parents feel like they can trust the educators on a campus.
- 2 **Orientation as an Event and as a Process:** At the P-12 level, this is called the Open House; however, taking more time to show the parents what it means for a student to be on a campus may help parents to be less dysfunctionally involved in their child's life. For example, an orientation tour could be done for all new and incoming students and their parents.
- 3 **Handbooks and Similar Print Materials:** Both students and parents should have a handbook that lists information, such as a testing calendar for the school year, a grievance policy, and other pertinent information about the school district and school. During the year, as new information is gathered, this should be mailed to the parents from a central point (i.e., from the principal's office).
- 4 **Whom to Contact:** "Most college presidents or provosts don't want to be called when the hot water in a residence hall is lacking," just as a principal shouldn't be the first person a parent contacts when a student hasn't made the coveted 'A'. Give parents the contact numbers of those whom they need to contact, or chain of command, when faced with certain occurrences. (pp. 43-46)

It is pertinent to note that the percentage of buddy and helicopter parents is small, but applying the steps above may help to lower the percentage for your campus even more. Taub's (2008) work also centered on college students, and her advice may also help public educators in working with parents. It would be good to remember that most parents

are invested in being good parents; have shared goals with educators concerning their child's success, growth, and maturity; accept educators teaching about child development, which can be helpful; and, want to be acknowledged that they have a role at school (pp. 24-25).

The key is finding that special tool that works best for your parents on your campus.

Student Off-Campus Behavior

Every SCOC should have a section that explicitly describes and defines what off-campus behavior looks like and what consequences, if any, may

be applied if a violation occurs. In many states, educators do not have jurisdiction over what can be done in a private home where students and parents are concerned. Unless the situation is brought to the campus through, for instance, a text message, pictures, or gossip that disrupts the school environment, the schools will have to defer to the law enforcement agencies to investigate and make arrests as needed.

Unfortunately, some parents and students are creating unsafe environments in private homes, which brings concern to educators when these students come back to school and discuss their weekend dalliances. So, when are educators allowed to discipline students for off-campus behavior and address the parents' actions? First, for any off-campus violations of both the SCOC and penal code, a concurrent investigation should be done: one that takes place through the school and one that law enforcement will conduct. If there is a video or pictures of the incident, an arrest may be imminent if it is evident that a violation of the penal code has been made. Second, for students, a clear indication that a penal code violation has occurred would mean that a SCOC violation has also been made. Remember that your SCOC should have the most severe and expellable offenses aligned with the state penal code, which means that if they violate one code, they automatically violate the other. Finally, if criminal charges have been made against a parent, banishment from any school property accompanied by a trespass warning may be given.

Criminally, you may give trespass warnings and ban a parent from the campus or other school property. However, when banning a person from campus, it must be an all-out ban for a criminal trespass violation to be referred to and enforced by the police. In other words, you cannot allow the parent to come on campus for a parent/teacher conference and not for anything else if you want the trespass warning to have effect. If you do allow a parent on campus during their time of banishment from the campus, the trespass ban would be ineffective, and the legal system would be removed from the equation. To be sure that you are following what your state and local codes require, please check and read them thoroughly and make sure everyone involved knows about the banishment.

When it comes to disguising alcohol on campuses, students are learning new ways to get drunk at school without being caught. Some students buy licorice and soak it in vodka or other alcohol, then eat it as a snack at school. Others make homemade Jell-o, pour alcohol in the mix, chill it, then take it to school for a snack. Still others use other orifices to get drunk by inserting vodka- (or other type of alcohol-) soaked tampons vaginally or rectally. Then, there are those that just bring water or coke bottles full of alcohol and drink them throughout the day.

When it comes to sex, there are a growing number of parents who believe that allowing their child to have sex in their home is perfectly okay. Clean

sheets, a safe environment, a clean bathroom to shower in afterward, and a supply of condoms are what these parents believe is best for their child to have when engaging in their first/subsequent sexual encounters. There have been some parents who have created a sex commune by allowing not only their child but also other minors to have sex in their homes. When educators are faced with these two realizations about alcohol and sexual encounters in family homes with adult permission or participation, their jobs become more complicated.

If all of this is known, when is it reasonable to discipline students for off-campus behavior? Students must be taught that they may be disciplined for actions done both on campus and off campus if a violation of either the SCOC or the penal/criminal code occurs. Additionally, in the instances where neither has been directly violated, students in extra-curricular activities, such as athletics or other competitive clubs may be disciplined through their extra-curricular teacher. Most clubs and organizations have students sign a contract that outlines a merit and demerit system. Within this system, specific violations of the contract and organization are spelled out, which gives the teacher/coach/sponsor room to discipline according to the contract. For example, if a soccer player gets drunk at a party and his or her coach finds out, he or she may be benched for a game for violating the athletic contract.

The school administrators and the SRO, as needed, will handle off-campus behavior that occurs when a student is at a school-sponsored event, such as an out-of-town sporting contest. The SCOC and the penal code are enforceable away from campus when the school pays for and sponsors students to perform at another venue; no matter whether the venue is in another state or country, the school rules would apply.

Finally, the school can discipline students who behave in an activity off campus that is reported to the police department where an arrest is made or a ticket is issued. For instance, if a group of students burgle five houses over the weekend and they get caught and arrested, the school administrators may enforce discipline through suspension, expulsion, or placement in a disciplinary alternative school even if the students go to court and are found not guilty. Administrators may still discipline the students in situations such as this based on the initial reports of illegal conduct. School district policies and guidelines will be helpful in this type of instance as they may give an administrator more options.

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 It is impossible to stop every possible criminal act on a campus. Students and parents may be committing criminal acts on campus that may never be discovered.
 - a. If this statement is true, what needs to be in place to protect students from possible parental predators?
 - b. What should be in place to help educators identify students with alcohol or other illegal drugs while on campus?
- 2 Off-campus behavior is becoming more relevant to educators and students at a school because what happens off-campus is regularly brought back to school, which may then lead to interruptions in the educational process.
 - a. How do educators prevent off-campus behavior to affect the learning environment?
 - b. When does an off-campus incident become a school issue and not just a police issue?
 - c. What types of jurisdictions do you have as an administrator to enforce school policy for off-campus behavior at your campus?
- 3 Lunch policies differ from school district to school district.
 - a. What is your school's lunch policy and does it help to keep students safe?
 - b. Weigh the pros and cons of having a closed or open campus.
 - c. What are the rules for a parent or family member to eat lunch with a student on your campus?
- 4 Refer to Chapter 2 under When Should Someone Have Known?!
 - a. Discuss the signs or actions that a parent would have to display or exhibit in order for educators to become worried or suspicious that something untoward is occurring between a parent and a student?
 - b. What do your state laws impart concerning sexual contact between minors and adults? Between adult students and adults?
- 5 Looking at the big picture,
 - a. what are the emotional and social ramifications for Cassidy as she tries to move on with her life at Roswell High School?
 - b. What are the ramifications for the all the students on campus?
 - c. What are the political ramifications for the educators?

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