



Social Media Issues

Working with Parents: Building Relationships for Student Success, 3rd edition

Read an excerpt from Dr. Payne's new release

By Ruby K. Payne, PhD

Social media can be a blessing and/or a curse, but it is a daily reality in schools. It consumes a great deal of administrator time.

What is the worst part about being bullied on the Internet and social media?

1. You cannot be seen or heard for who you are.
2. It is hard to fight back. (Who do you hit?)
3. You have no control over the size of the audience.
Many people make a decision about you without knowing anything about you.
4. It results in personal or professional exclusion.
5. There is a period of time where you cannot defend yourself. Only others can defend you.

Internet and social media bullying involves the following:

Pick out a detail or aspect of a person or idea, distort and enlarge that particular detail, omit key information, and “smear” the professional or personal reputation

of the individual. Often the supporters of the person being bullied will also be targeted. The result is that people stay clear of you simply because of the confusion, the amount of time it takes to figure out the actual truth, and the fear of being smeared themselves with the same brush.

One of the ways you know that the bullying is a coordinated effort on the part of more than one person is that the same words and phrases show up again and again. In *The Smear*, Sharyl Attkisson identifies this characteristic in organized Internet smearing. Usually there are four or five key words or terms that constantly show up. In my case, the words and terms were deficit model, stereotyping, racist, not research-based, and culture of poverty.

Bullying works best when the words used are simple, easy to repeat, and negative in connotation.

For adolescents, Internet and social media bullying is almost always personal. The gain for those who bully is social status and control. Because adolescence is a time when identity and peer acceptance is so critical for adult development, this bullying can be devastating.

There is a tendency on the part of adults to dismiss Internet and social media bullying of adolescents as unimportant. Adults who do that have never personally experienced the rage, frustration, discouragement, helplessness, and anger at the incredible emotional impact of such activity.

How do you handle it? Here are some suggestions:

Do:

1. Respond in a timely manner.
2. Call or ask for an in-person meeting.
3. Appreciate their feedback.
4. Use invitational language.
5. Clarify the issue with procedural questions to get the facts.
6. Create a much wider “net” of positive responses to your campus. Have each class “parent” post at least once a week something positive from each class (activity, student work, teacher quote, etc.).
7. Have your PTO create positive social media campaigns for the school’s social media. Ask them to make that part of their role.
8. Identify parents who can/will respond to attacks on the school or administrators/teachers—for example, “You might want to talk to them; they have helped me with all of my concerns” or “I have not had that experience.”
9. Identify the 10–15% of the parents who post negatively on social media about your campus. Before school starts, do home visits with those parents, along with a counselor and teacher, to establish a relationship.
10. Have parents sign an agreement about how they will use social media. (See example in next column.)
11. Give monthly rewards by classroom for the most positive social media posts on the part of parents.
12. Create a parents’ website—for example, “We love our school.”
13. Warn your staff and parents about deep fakes. Stay out of the Karpman triangle.

Don’t:

1. Defend yourself online.
2. Respond in anger.
3. Divulge any confidential information. Just say, “In order to protect all children, we do not give out any confidential information.”
4. Expect that the individual will accept reason. The attack is coming from an emotional response of the individual.
5. Say the information is incorrect. That just invites a fight.

Have a Plan for Responding to Negative Social Media Comments

This is a sample plan:

1. When a negative posting is made online, immediately notify your administrator.
2. Immediately acknowledge the comment, and say, “I would like to hear your concerns in greater detail. When/how can I contact you?”
3. Identify with your administrator the immediate follow-up plan that will be used.

Example of a Parental Agreement About Social Media

I, _____ (parent name),
agree to the following to protect my own child:

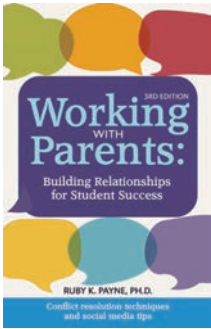
1. If I have an issue with something at school, I will not immediately post to social media. I will first contact the teacher or administrator to get the facts correct.
2. I will not post negative comments about other parents, other people’s children, or school personnel without first having a conversation with the administrator.
3. I do understand that a great deal of information on social media is incorrect or incomplete. I do understand that “deep fakes” are a reality and that my own identity or my child’s identity can be distorted as well.
4. I do understand that human trafficking uses social media to find victims. I understand that I will not post detailed information about my own child or any other child online.

_____ Signature _____ Date

AUTHOR



Dr. Ruby K. Payne, CEO and founder of aha! Process, is a career educator, bestselling author, speaker, and publisher. She is a leading expert on human mindsets and solutions for creating successful relationships with people from all backgrounds.



Learn more about the latest edition of *Working with Parents* at <https://bit.ly/3IJhLiR>.

Learn more from Dr. Payne during her Master Class "Working with Parents: Building Relationships for Student Success – Techniques for Conflict Resolution and Addressing Social Media Issues" at the TEPSA

Summer Conference, June 12-14 in Round Rock. Master Classes (separate fee applies) provide expanded in-depth learning with top leaders in the field. Explore AI, behavior, school culture, relationship building, stress management, sustaining success, and creating high-performing teams. Featured speakers include Stephanie McConnell, Adam L. Saenz, Tia McIntosh, Hayward R. Jean, Dan St. Romain, and Leslie Garakani.

Whether you're an early career or seasoned administrator, there's something for everyone at the TEPSA Summer Conference! Learn creative strategies and trends in PK-8 education while making meaningful connections to help you reach your professional and personal goals. See keynoters and featured speakers on back page, visit tepsa.org or scan QR code for more information.



TEPSA Leader is published four times a year by the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association, 501 East 10th St, Austin, Texas 78701. Telephone: 512-478-5268.

Statements of fact and opinion are made on the responsibility of the authors alone and do not imply an opinion on the part of TEPSA officers, members or staff.

Duplicating: Educators may reproduce a single article from this publication without making a written request provided: 1) the duplication is for an educational purpose at a nonprofit institution; 2) copies are made available without charge; and 3) each copy includes full citation of the source. Permission to reproduce more than one article will be granted if requested to do so in writing.

Subscription is a benefit of TEPSA Comprehensive Membership.



Call for Articles
TEPSA Leader welcomes unsolicited submissions. For a copy of writer's guidelines, visit www.tepsa.org.

Copyright 2024 by the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association.

Harley Eckhart, Executive Director

Belinda Neal, EdD, Associate Executive Director for Instruction

Anita Jiles, Associate Executive Director for Marketing and Communications

Cecilia Cortez, Marketing and Communications Manager

Follow @TEPSATalk and #WeLeadTX on social media.