POWERPLAY IN THE CLASSROOM: A MODULE DESIGNED TO COMBAT AUTHORITY ABUSE

by

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ABSTRACT

Bullying has received much attention among researchers; however, the research produced has predominantly involved peer bullying. This project addressed the issue of authority abuse in schools by teachers, an area of research that is currently limited.

The reviewed literature demonstrated a need for a program that would educate pre-service teachers and provide an opportunity for self-reflection. What resulted was the development of a module called ‘Power Play’, which provides teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their teaching philosophy and teaching styles. Also, the module stresses the importance of maintaining a balanced life-style and provides information on effective stress management.

The module was presented on three separate occasions to pre-service educators. The feedback received has prompted future changes to the Power Play module. The core message of the project is that teachers must take care of themselves if they hope to be effective educators in the classroom.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I was exposed to bullying, in various forms, most of my adolescent life. Bullying caused me to dread the long walk home from school each day and ultimately caused me to change schools at the age of 12. However, I do not view myself as a victim. I have emerged from my experiences with a stronger sense of who I am. As a young man, I refused to allow others to steal away my power; although I was targeted by many of my peers, I refused to be victimized by them.

To deal with some of the bullying that I was experiencing in my life, I enrolled in martial arts as a young child. What I learned from my childhood experiences with bullies and my subsequent Taekwondo training was that I do not want to make others feel as I was made to feel. Having the ability to overpower others, physically or socially, does not give one the right to do so.

I have benefited greatly from my training in Taekwondo, and I became a martial arts instructor partly to share what I had learned with and from others. I give back through regular instruction or by providing the community with workshops on self-defence and bullying prevention. More recently, I have pursued a teaching career for the same reasons. My goal is to give today’s youth the necessary tools to overcome whatever obstacles they may experience in their lives.

My project topic emerged from experiences and stories that I heard when attaining my Bachelor of Education. I was well aware that bullying was an issue in schools; however, during my practicum and conversations that followed, I became
acutely aware of the unspoken presence of authority abuse in teacher-student relationships. Each time I heard of or witnessed an act of authority abuse, I felt that my silence condoned the abusive actions. In many ways I was much like the bully bystander, but instead of standing in fear of physical or psychological reprisal, I feared for my teaching degree—my future.

I have come to terms with not speaking out then because I now have decided to take action, by creating an awareness program, as a proactive resource that has the potential to provide pre-service teachers with a suite of research-based tools to decrease abuse of authority by early-career teachers. The program is designed to elicit self-reflection that results in action, to help teachers be the educators children need, to be cognizant of their immense power and respect the responsibility that comes with it, and to create a safe environment that is conducive to learning.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to use current research to increase awareness of authority abuse. There are potential risks of becoming abusive on the part of persons in positions of authority and this project is designed with the hope that it will provide opportunities for pre-service and in-service educators to reflect on their teaching philosophy and teaching styles and create positive change, if needed. In addition to creating awareness and reflection, the project seeks to educate teachers regarding effective stress management and the importance of a balanced life-style, as a preventative measures of abuse. Ultimately, the project is intended to be a supplement for current
teacher education programs. Lastly, the project is designed so that others may facilitate the ‘Power Play’ module.

**Rationale for the Project**

Recently, bullying has received much attention from the popular media and within the school system. There has been extensive research on the topic, which has resulted in the formulation of various theories that are now the basis for numerous bullying prevention programs that have been implemented in schools throughout the country (Duffy & Nesdale, 2008). Nonetheless, the persistent belief is that bullying is predominantly a conflict that occurs between peers. Rarely has it been considered that bullying can take place between a teacher and a child, possibly because the teacher-student relationship largely takes place behind closed doors.

Teacher bullying shares commonalities with workplace bullying, due to the imbalance of power present in authority abuse; however, workplace bullying involves adults, not children, and, although it may result in similar outcomes, adults are not a captive audience, as they can actively search for new employment and are believed to be more confident in putting forth claims of abuse (Turney, 2003). In contrast, when a teacher abuses her or his students, the children are held captive because they cannot quit school (Parsons, 2005).

A teacher who provides social support contributes to a student’s social and academic achievements (Birchmeier, 2009). Conversely, an abusive teacher undermines a student’s social system and potentially turns peers against the student (McEvoy, 2005).
The act of abuse negatively impacts the student who has been victimized, through, among other outcomes, depression, anxiety, and decreased mental health; however, those who witness the abuse are also affected. Observers of victimization may experience increased mental health implications and decreased psychological performance (Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurst, 2009). The impact teacher bullying can have on children is largely unknown. What is known is that bullying by an authority is harmful. Educators need to know what constitutes abuse and how to effectively use their power, not abuse it.

The Power Play program addresses the issues surrounding authority abuse. It is designed to aid pre-service teachers to avoid the pitfalls of a career in the education field. Many teachers begin their teaching careers and an increasing number leave within the first five years (Chang, 2009). Those who remain either learn to deal with the stress involved in the job and become a contributing member of the field as they strive to make a difference in the lives of students or they may unknowingly start to abuse their authority. The Power Play program strives to lessen the latter and provide new teachers with the metacognitive skills to remain positive and enthusiastic in their teaching, which may help keep them in the field of education for the long term, benefiting all school stakeholders. With the participation of pre-service and potentially in-service educators, it is the hope of this project that teachers will begin to speak out with regard to how authority should be used, in and outside of the classroom, by those who have been privileged enough to receive it.
Overview of the Project

This project consists of four chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, ‘Power Play’ module, and Reflection. The first chapter begins with an autobiographical statement followed by the purpose of the project, rationale for the project, and overview of the project. Chapter 2 is a review of the current literature on authority abuse and teacher bullying. The chapter first substantiates and identifies contributors of abuse and then discusses teaching styles and how they relate to proactive and reactive aggression. Chapter 3 is the ‘Power Play’ module, including slides, handouts, links to videos, and facilitator’s notes. This chapter is designed to allow educators to facilitate their own ‘Power Play’ module. The fourth chapter is a reflection based on three pilots of the module. This chapter describes changes made to the module based on participant feedback, as well as impending changes to the module in the near future.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

*It is vulgar and violent; it is rarely spoken about; it is destructive and hidden – it is child abuse. It is the abuse of our children by those in schools with whom we entrust their care. (McKenzie, 2009, p. 130)*

One of the leading experts in the field of bullying is arguably Dan Olweus, generally viewed as the founding father of bullying research. Olweus’ comprehensive definition became the most widely accepted definition of bullying. This definition states that bullying is an abusive treatment by an individual, which occurs through use of force or coercion. The behaviour is unprovoked aggression that is repetitive and done with the intent to harm. Recently, researchers have suggested that Olweus’ definition lacks breadth, as it is likely that bullying has evolved since his initial research. However, the definition is not the only aspect of bullying research that needs broadening—it is the research itself that is limited due to its tendency not to consider all individuals who may be involved. When thinking of bullying, one usually envisions a conflict between children who vary slightly in age and size, a conflict often concerning one child who has attained a higher social status than the other, thus involving a power imbalance. It is rarely considered that bullying may take place between an adult and a child, although it is unlikely that bullying teachers are a new phenomenon. For as long as authorities have existed, there have likely been those who have abused their position. The power imbalance present during a peer-on-peer bullying situation pales in comparison to a situation that involves a student and an adult authority.

Given the need for a more applicable definition of bullying or abuse, the authority abuse discussed in this project is based on the definition proposed by McEvoy (2005) “as
a pattern of conduct, rooted in a power differential, that threatens, harms, humiliates, induces fear, or causes students substantial emotional distress” (p. 1). There is one distinct difference between Olweus’ and McEvoy’s definitions worth mentioning and that is the absence of provocation on the part of the victim, as stated by Olweus. McEvoy’s definition does not mention that teacher abuse is unprovoked as many students may provoke teachers on a daily basis. However, regardless of provocation, teachers are not justified in using their position of power to bully students.

Authority Abuse

Substantiating Authority Abuse

McEvoy (2005) conducted an interview-based study with 236 current and former high school students regarding their recollections of teachers they perceived to be abusive. The questions used in the interview were created from descriptions provided by teachers and administrators on the subject of colleagues whom they perceived to be abusive and the school’s response to the abuse. Fixed and narrative responses were collected.

In the fixed responses, the respondents indicated that 93% of students in their high school would agree on which teachers bullied students. Certain students identified as many as 5 teachers on staff who were bullies. Many of the respondents believed there were no consequences, officially or unofficially, for teachers who bully. The vast majority of students, 89%, stated that the teachers who bullied had been teaching for 5 years or more.
The narratives of the respondents echoed the ideas of the fixed responses—that teachers who bullied were not held accountable for their actions. The narratives also illustrated the students’ frustration with schools because nothing was done when teachers bullied. Students also felt that the majority of bullies were veteran teachers. One respondent said that, “Teachers who were mean had been there for a long time, and students just assumed nothing would happen [if they complained].” Another student stated, “People could complain until they were blue in the face, but nothing would happen unless the teacher was physically abusive, and they never were” (McEvoy, 2005, p. 7). The students felt that veteran teachers were protected and, as a result, could act without consequence. “Seniority would always protect them in a situation with a student … basically it was the teacher’s word against the student’s word” (McEvoy, 2005, p. 7). Veteran teachers not only had acquired, but also were shielded by, their unquestioned credibility. Teachers who are protected can cause devastating harm to students, especially if students’ cries for help go unanswered.

The potential impact that a negative teacher can have on one child directly and on an entire class indirectly can only be speculated upon, since there has been very little research on the subject. It is not easy to empirically determine the existence of teacher abuse in the classroom. The difficulty originates from the teaching model itself, as teachers predominantly work behind closed doors and gaining access for the purpose of observation is increasingly difficult. Another issue is that of perception. What a teacher may have intended may not have been what a student received. Conversely, even if the student’s perception is correct, the child’s word does not hold much weight, when compared to an authority. Teachers may suggest that a student merely “misperceived or
misrepresented the behavior in question, or that it is all in their mind” (McEvoy, 2005, p. 2). However, when parents’ experiences and the parents of classroom peers echo the perceptions of students, it lends validity to their claims, which is further strengthened when certain teachers provide substantiation from the bullied students’ lived experiences. The subsequent pages introduce potential contributors of authority abuse, such as stress, frustration, and burnout. It then discusses parenting styles, as they relate to teaching and the bullying theory of proactive and reactive aggression. Finally, the literature review addresses the element of shame and the responsibility teachers and administrators have to intervene when they become aware of abuse.

**Potential Contributors to Authority Abuse**

Most educators state that they are satisfied with and have a passion for teaching (Rudow, 1999) and that they believe their career is rewarding (Borg & Riding, 1991). This majority is not anxious, stressed out, or on the verge of burning out (Faber, 1984). However, stress in teaching, which tends to exceed that of other occupations (Cox & Brockely, 1984), with approximately 25-33% of teachers suffering from stress (Macdonald, 1999), is a problem for many novice and veteran teachers.

In the United States, “up to 25% of beginning teachers leave the teaching field before their third year, and almost 40% leave the profession within the first 5 years of teaching” (Chang, 2009, p. 194), this phenomenon being referred to as the “revolving door” of education (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 501). The reality that new teachers face is that “teaching is an ‘all consuming’ profession” (Dibara, 2007, p. 24), which contributes to the high attrition rate. Novice educators strive to perform at the level of more experienced teachers on staff, but they are unable to perform proficiently due to their lack of
experience. Many novice teachers lack the ability to deal with behavioural issues, curriculum demands, and administrative responsibilities concurrently (Stoughton, 2007). As one first year teacher stated, “My once passionate love for teaching has dwindled down to mere survival” (Johnson & Webb, 1999, p. 19).

The transition from theory to practice in the education field can prove difficult for some novice teachers as they quickly realize that there are realities at play for which their teacher training did not prepare them. New teachers unable to cope with stress may yield to emotional and physical fatigue (Black, 2003).

Frustration is reported as the most frequently experienced negative emotion by teachers (Chang, 2009) and often accompanies the stress experienced in teaching. It occurs when planned or ongoing activities are continually interrupted (Averill, 1982). The interruption may result from students struggling with existing concepts or from behavioural issues. Interruptions exacerbate teachers’ feelings of frustration when they believe student behaviour is intentional and controllable (Brophy & McCaslin, 1992) or when capable students struggle academically due to a lack of effort, not ability (Prawat et al., 1983). Teacher frustration worsens with feelings of little or no control over repeated student misbehaviour, which contributes to teacher burnout (Public Agenda, 2004). The teaching profession can be increasingly challenging for individuals who determine they are not meant to teach, yet remain in the field. Teachers who continue teaching, yet do not cope with stress well, whether novice or veteran teachers, may gradually wear down as they become increasingly negative, fatigued, and ultimately burned out, negatively affecting the wellbeing and development of their students (Skukla & Trivedi, 2008). This gradual experience can lead to a career that is dissatisfying and void of passion.
An interventionist action research study conducted by McKenzie (2009) demonstrates what can happen when teachers continually experience frustration with students. Seven experienced white teachers, each of whom had taught over 8 years, and who were considered by their principals average or better than average educators, volunteered to participate in the study. The teachers partook in semi-structured focus group sessions to share their perceptions of teaching in an urban school that was predominantly populated by African-American and Latino students.

During the first focus group, teachers were asked, “Why do you think students of colour are performing at lower levels than their white counterparts?” (McKenzie, 2009, p. 131). The question unleashed an onslaught of racial and hostile comments concerning the teachers’ racialized students during this and future focus groups over the 6-month period of the study. There were three categories that emerged from the data collected. First, the teachers failed to view their students as children who were partaking in typical child behaviour. One of the participants said, “If you could put all the freaks in one room and let them kill each other, if you could find someone … to monitor that class and then let the rest of them learn. Triage. Cut loose the ones that you know aren’t going to make it, and you can spend all of your time [on the others]” (McKenzie, p. 134). This teacher failed to see her students as children; instead she saw them as freaks or criminals.

Second, the participants blamed their students for making them act in uncaring ways; the teachers said they “were ‘mean’ to their children. They said that they hollered at their students, and blamed the students for making them, the adults, act in uncaring and disrespectful ways towards the students” (Mackenzie, p. 133). One of the teachers continued stating that students were accustomed to being treated disrespectfully so this
was the way they were to be treated. Third, the teachers not only excluded their students; they humiliated them as well. One of the teachers explained how she excluded and humiliated her student:

Friday morning I had a kid stand outside my room [for] ... an hour and a half, [he] refused to come in. Refused to go to the office. ... He was mad at me ... which I know, this is really bad, but I don’t care. On Thursday he got really mouthy with me at the end of the day, and he was going, ‘so’ to me, like that. I went, ‘so,’ back to him. I said, ‘Everybody, let’s say it.’ And everybody said, ‘so.’ And that ... And that just sent him over the edge ... and the class, they knew I was not in the mood anymore to deal with him. (McKenzie, p. 136).

This teacher felt that this particular student was defiant and difficult. She felt that the boy had no reason to behave as he did. Later, one of the other teachers informed the researcher that the child’s parents had both died of AIDS, that his sister had been raped by her uncle, and the child now lived with his grandmother but, according to his teacher, he did not have any reason to act as he did. The continued frustration experienced by the teachers in the study caused them to view and threaten their students as criminals, without any concern for the students’ wellbeing.

**Teaching Styles**

These kinds of teacher behaviours may be the result of differing teaching styles, congruent with ideas around parenting styles. Responding to a child’s needs and the expectation for responsible and mature behaviour are the basis for three distinct types of parenting styles developed by Baumrind (1967): Authoritative, Permissive, and Authoritarian. Although Baumrind’s theory was intended to explain varying styles of parenting to demonstrate best practices in child rearing, her theory has since influenced areas of leadership, such as business and education.
Many educators have adopted an authoritative philosophy because it maintains a balance between the demands of students and the ways in which teachers tend to respond to their students. The authoritative teacher not only strives for students to achieve academically but also seeks to affect students’ character and values in a positive way (Loeb, Rouse, & Shorris, 2007). This style is believed to be the optimal approach when dealing with children (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994) as rules are established and maintained with justification by means of explanations as to why rules are imposed (Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997). Many of the theories that are learned in teacher education, such as Glasser’s (1997) ‘Choice Theory’ and Dreikurs’ (1958) ‘Logical & Natural Consequences,’ easily fit into the authoritative approach to education. However, transition from theory to practice can be difficult, even if rewarding.

The permissive style of teaching generally lacks authority, and the authority that it does impose is inconsistent; yet the permissive style does provide a nurturing environment that promotes warmth, tolerance, and acceptance (Glasgow et al., 1997). This teacher philosophy blurs the lines between schoolteacher and friend. The permissive teacher is concerned with students’ feelings over their academic achievement with this concern making it difficult to enforce rules. When novice teachers do not set initial boundaries in their classrooms, behaviour issues may arise because “as much as [they] want to be a friend, [they] are the teacher, not a peer. This is often difficult for young teachers to remember” (Sharp, 1999, p. 2). Being friends with one’s students can also cause problems when attempting to exercise authority, or when providing accurate summative evaluations. This style of teaching may also draw the attention of the public
or administration, who may view the teacher as incompetent due to his or her lack of control over the class. Although the passive teacher may enjoy a level of popularity among certain students, administration may also be alerted should students not perform academically. Perceived incompetence may cause the administration to make inquiries resulting in a passive teacher adopting a harder approach, one that ensures silence, obedience, and academic productivity, student characteristics that are valued—even though harsher methods may be deemed, by some, as an abuse of authority (Manke, 1997).

The authoritarian style of teaching is the hard approach. Authoritarian teachers set high demands yet fail to provide any real emotional support for their students’ needs (Glasgow et al., 1997). An authoritarian style of classroom management sets firm limits, its discipline is to be unquestioned, and should those limits be challenged retribution will come swiftly. Reschny’s retelling of an account provided by the parents of a 10-year-old boy after meeting his teacher provides an excellent example of the authoritarian approach to classroom management:

He told the parents at the teacher meet and greet night how things were going to run in his classroom and all of us, basically, picked our jaws up off the floor because it was crazy. … The kids were not allowed to talk to each other, they were not allowed to talk to him unless they put their hand up and waited for everything to be quiet and for him to acknowledge them. They weren’t allowed, actually, to put their hand up more than once you know, they were told just to let everybody else have a turn. (Reschny, 2008, p. 27)

From the description above it is evident that the teacher expects absolute obedience from all students. The limits the teacher sets in his class seem to illustrate more of what one would expect from a dictatorship, not a North American classroom. Authoritarian teachers are potentially abusive, although this potential does not mean they will
necessarily become abusive, as a democracy is not necessary for caring to take place; however, what is required is for power to be used ethically (Noblit, 1993). Any system of authority must understand that with power comes responsibility, and the use of aggression, even verbally, in pursuit of a goal, at the expense of those perceived to be most vulnerable, is abuse.

In theory, according to Baumrind (1967), there are three distinct authority styles. However, in practice, teachers are possibly more likely to embody one particular style. Educators may use a mixture of the Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Passive styles; yet they will probably represent one style more strongly.

Reschny (2008) conducted a study that focused on teacher bullies through the lens of the parent. The participants were parents of children who had been subjected to bullying by teachers. The data were collected using face-to-face interviews. Some of the stories in the study demonstrate the extreme use of the three teaching styles.

The first participant, Tina, had two sons, Peter and Larry. Peter was excluded from participating in a track meet, in any capacity, by the coach of the track team, who was also the school’s vice principal. Peter had missed a few practices, due to sickness, and, as a result, was not permitted to participate or even attend the event as a spectator. “The issue was [that my son] was just shot right down and in my opinion that’s just being a total bully. ‘I’m bigger than you, I’m in charge here and you have no say in this’” (Reschny, 2008, p. 26). Four years later, Peter still has not participated in sports.

Tina’s son, Larry, who was attending a new school, experienced repeated abuse by his authoritarian teacher. The teacher often yelled at his students and was rude and negative. From the beginning, Larry was treated differently from other students, which
was evident to his peers. The teacher would belittle Larry in front of his peers and exclude him from class activities. Larry cried daily and began to experience health issues and started to withdraw, even from his family. Larry eventually moved schools.

Louise and Robert’s older son, Ross, disliked school resulting from an experience with an abusive teacher when the family lived in the UK; however, their younger daughter, Ann, thoroughly enjoyed school, that is, until the family moved to Canada. It only took Ann two weeks to transform from a student who was genuinely excited to go to school to someone who dreaded school. Ann is dyslexic and the hours of homework each night was overwhelming. Louise and Robert inquired, unsuccessfully, with Ann’s teacher, to see if they could help Ann. During a parent-teacher conference, it became evident that Ann’s teacher was burned out, and that there was no plan in place to help Ann succeed. Instead, the teacher only discussed Ann’s faults. Louise recalled the incident and said, “how do you tell a child that you’re absolutely rubbish, no good at any subject, there’s nothing good about you? How can a teacher sit with the parents as well as the child and have nothing positive to say about a child? That to me is bullying” (Reschny, 2008, p. 41).

Amy’s son, Jack, experienced repeated harassment from one of his teacher when he was in Grade 2. Jack’s teacher said she was distracted by the colour of his clothes. The teacher also accused Jack of stealing sticky tack and, when Amy called to inquire, she was accused of being an accomplice and threatened. The teacher said, “Oh yea, we’ll get together face to face. You’ll come and talk to me in my classroom and we’ll talk about your kid and you won’t leave standing” (Reschny, 2008, p 50). Following an unsuccessful meeting, mediated by the vice principal, Amy and Jack’s teacher
corresponded through letters, which the teacher used as a scare tactic, making Jack read the letters before bringing them home. After ‘Wacky Hair Day’ Jack returned home with a letter from the teacher stating that his hair was too tall and that the boy seated behind him could not see the board. The continued harassment took its toll on Jack, as he became unhappy, disconnected, and fatigued. His mother ended up allowing him to stay home to avoid the teacher. When Jack was in Grade 8, he was targeted again, when he and his friends were told they were “acting like a bunch of homos,” or asked, “are you a bunch of homos” by their teacher (Reschny, 2008, p. 56). This time, Amy’s meeting with Jack’s teacher successfully stopped the bullying.

In the stories told by parents, the teachers had high demands yet failed to provide any emotional support for their students. Some teachers seemed burned out, and were apathetic and unmotivated to help their students be successful. What is evident in the study is that none of the teachers adopted an authoritative teaching style. There was no balance; the teachers did not seek to assist the students academically, nor did they choose to affect the children in a positive way. Instead, each child was affected negatively.

**Types of Aggression**

**Proactive Aggression**

Teachers who adopt a predominantly authoritarian style of teaching may be methodical and persistent in their pursuit to have students achieve academically. This desire to have students achieve in and of itself can benefit students and result in student success; however, should aggression be used as a strategy to motivate or discipline students a teacher may be described as proactively aggressive (McAdams & Schmidt, 2007). According to Anderson and Bushman (2002), human aggression is any behaviour
that is done with the intent to cause harm to another individual, harm that the recipient would be motivated to avoid. Proactive aggression is aggression that is unprovoked (Brendgen et al., 2001) and is viewed as a suitable method to achieve a desired objective (Dodge & Coie, 1987). While not all authoritarian teachers act abusively, some authoritarian educators proactively use aggression and are “destructive in an active manner, characterized by aggressive or abusive behaviors such as yelling, ridiculing, name-calling, and threatening subordinates” (Skogstad et al., 2007, p. 81).

Two objectives of authoritarian teachers are academic achievement and appropriate student behaviour, objectives they share with passive and authoritative teachers. The difference is the measures certain authoritarian teachers will take to achieve these objectives. For example, one technique used by many educators is humour. “Humor is one of the most powerful tools teachers have” (Boerman-Cornell, 2000, p. 1). It can be used to build students up or tear them apart. Appropriate humour can encourage students, defuse situations, diminish anxiety, and cultivate positive learning environments (Torok, McMorris, & Lin, 2004). However, humour used at the expense of a student, intentionally or not, can have negative consequences. A teacher can use humour as a weapon with one effective way to attack a targeted student being taunting a student with the use of sarcasm. The word “sarcasm” is a Greek term that means, “to tear flesh.” It is associated with words such as “cutting,” “ridicule,” and “mockery” (Briggs, 1928). The word itself insinuates that, when sarcasm is used, there is intent to inflict pain on the recipient. Thus sarcasm is an effective tool for the proactive aggressor. Although a

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1 Barbara Coloroso (2002) distinguishes between teasing and taunting. Teasing is an activity where individuals partake in playful banter that is shared equally. Taunting is one-sided and is done out of contempt for the addressee as it is intended to target, humiliate, and hurt. A proactively aggressive authoritarian teacher may target students because they are not achieving academically or refuse to comply with the teacher’s demands.
teacher does not need to be proactively aggressive to wound with words, intent to tease that results in harm or humiliation can have negative consequences. However, recognizing, acknowledging, and taking steps to make amends for the unintended hurt should not leave students feeling excluded.

Another teaching tool that can potentially be abusive is the use of time-out. The intention of time-out is to adjust behaviour, not to humiliate or punish a child. When educators misuse time-outs, they not only isolate children from their peers but they violate the children’s civil rights and potentially cause them psychological harm (Campbell & Stenton, 2004).

**Reactive Aggression**

Someone who reacts emotionally, on impulse, to a perceived threat as a means of defense that is aggressive and atypical is characterized as a reactive aggressor (Gasser & Keller, 2009). A supposed threat is not the only trigger of reactive aggression as frustration may also elicit a hostile response (Blair, 2004). When teachers fail to meet students’ needs, they may begin to get frustrated with the ever-increasing weight of their position; gradually they are unable to perform (Dibara, 2007). This gradual wearing down may result in teachers reacting in ways that are uncharacteristic, namely, reactive aggression.

Daily, teachers are presented with a continuous stream of potentially stressful experiences; these external factors range from student misbehaviour to inadequate administrative or parental support (Maxfield, 2009). The expectations placed on teachers from the administration and parents can be overwhelming, especially for teachers entering the profession. These stresses are in addition to those present in the classroom as
teachers are expected to manage behaviour and to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of their students. When teachers’ initial attempts to alter student misbehaviour fail, instead of altering their approach, they tend to “try harder negatively” (Barbetta et al., 2005, p. 12). Student misbehaviour, if not remedied, can eventually place a teacher in a state of distress as a teacher may perceive the misbehaviour as a personal attack (Barbetta et al.) and, at times, want to attack back.

Another source of frustration can be students failing to meet academic expectations. Averill (1982) suggests that it is the “frustration or the interruption of some ongoing or planned activity,” [that is] the single most frequently mentioned anger-precipitating event, often involving the “violation of important personal expectations or wishes” (p. 173). If continued efforts of the teacher to facilitate student learning begin to seem futile, the nonaggressive reactions of the teacher may be eclipsed by uncharacteristically aggressive behaviour.

As the demands of teachers steadily increase so does the need to identify and regulate potential internal factors of reactive aggression. When teachers perpetually feel overwhelmed, they may become emotionally and physically exhausted, as though they were accomplishing nothing. Stress may also cause teachers to lose the ability to control their behaviour (Baumeister et al., 1994). Teachers may experience anger when they feel provoked by students (Spielberger & Sydenman, 1994) with anger then motivating confrontational behaviour (Moons et al., 2010). When teachers experience a decrease in emotional and/or physical energy, they are more inclined to lash out. To endure continual provocation from various sources, without reacting aggressively, teachers must achieve a balance in their lives, one that provides opportunities for adequate rest. Muraven and
Baumeister (2000) suggested that self-control is like a muscle and as such is susceptible to fatigue. Self-control, like most energy systems, is vulnerable to depletion if used excessively and extensively. Therefore, adequate rest is necessary for self-regulation. Teachers who do not take time for much needed respite may eventually burn out.

**Call to Action**

The vast majority of teachers in the education system cares for their students and truly wants to make a difference in their lives (Shaughnessy & Smith, 1998). It is this desire that makes education work and helps to prepare children for the world. However, in spite of the efforts of the majority of teachers, students experience abuse at the hands of teachers. Olweus (1996) conducted a survey with sixth through ninth grade students and 1.7% reported a teacher had bullied them during the previous five months. It is estimated that 15% to 30% of students are abused by their teachers (Brendgen, Wanner, & Vitaro, 2006), and there are schools that have acknowledged having abusive teachers on their staff (McEvoy, 2005). Even teachers are aware of this problem. In a study that anonymously surveyed teachers, 70% of teachers felt bullying colleagues were a frequent occurrence in their school (Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, & Brethour, 2004).

Some teachers habitually target students, in and out of the classroom, and shame them as a means of discipline (Higgins & Moule, 2009). The issue with shame is that a teacher does not separate the child from the behaviour. Instead of correcting the child’s behaviour, the teacher attacks the child. When children are shamed, the message that is sent is that they are bad, inherently bad.

Thus, what is so terribly crippling about shame is, unlike guilt, individuals cannot ‘act’ their way out of shame, because they cannot act their way out of being who
they are. Thus, instead of being proud of who they are, most particularly children, individuals may absorb the perceptions of those around them and take on others’ perceptions as being ‘real.’ (McKenzie, 2009, p. 132)

When a teacher helps students to realize their self-worth, this affirmation can be the “crucial factor in supporting their learning” (Horsman, 2004, p. 23). However, when a teacher shames a student, the student may begin to see himself or herself in the same manner as the teacher does. Shaming can lead students to believe they are worthless, which can also affect their ability to learn.

When teachers overtly abuse students, it suggests that other faculty members are aware that such behaviour is taking place. Yet teachers remain silent in fear of retaliation from colleagues and teacher unions (Twemlow et al., 2004). As McEvoy (2005) stated, students who are bullied by teachers feel trapped because they believe they are powerless, as they fear retaliation should they inform a higher authority. This situation leaves everyone standing in fear of the bully and the bully “receive[s] no retribution or other negative consequences” (McEvoy, 2005, p. 2) for his or her actions. When teachers will not stand up for students, they are bullied not once but twice, as students are unable to gain refuge from their abuser. When teachers are aware of authority bullying and they do nothing to stop it, they become the bystanders and their silence and inaction condones this behaviour. As a result, these teachers are just as guilty as the bully (Coloroso, 2002).

When a child is humiliated or excluded by an authority figure, someone who is responsible for the child’s wellbeing, the results can be and often are devastating (McKenzie, 2009). Therefore, caring is not enough. If teachers want to make a difference in the lives of students, they must address the issue of teacher bullying. To do anything else is to be complicit in the abuse of students.
Conclusion

Although the majority of teachers do not habitually take part in bullying, how many ‘teacher bullies’ should be tolerated in schools, if any? It is unlikely that any proposed method to deter authority bullying would prevent the abuse completely. However, certain approaches may significantly diminish the occurrences of bullying by teachers. There are two potential ways to minimize authority abuse; first, a proactive approach would prevent the likelihood of future teachers becoming abusive. Offering pre-service teachers courses, in their preparatory programs, such as effective teaching styles, personal stress management, and behavioural management, may provide teacher candidates with knowledge and resources needed when experiencing difficult and/or stressful situations. Second, providing support and protection for students and colleagues who report abusive teachers will increase the likelihood that the abuse will be investigated and potentially deterred.

There will always be risks associated with reporting abuse but isn’t the potential result worth the risk? When teachers become aggressive, it is the children who are affected the most, as they are easy targets. The students who fall victim to authority abuse are “like shooting fish in a barrel: as a captive audience, students can neither fight nor flee” (Parsons, 2005, p. 39). It is for this reason that other authorities who witness such abuse must stand up and take action, for in failing to act they become part of the problem.

When a teacher targets a child for abuse, it is likely that other children will be affected. As stated by Rigby (1996), the abusive teacher might promote bullying within the classroom as students view the teacher as an effective educator and therefore a positive role model.
Education is designed to help socialize children and provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful. However, when children are abused or misguided, they can develop in ways that are less than optimal. All children need to be treated equitably, with the same level of respect. If teachers and administrators do not stand up for the students, who are unable to stand up for themselves, they are contributing to the devaluation of those who have been placed in their care.
CHAPTER 3: POWER PLAY MODULE

The following provides an overview of the program and how to implement it in the pre-service curriculum. I developed the Power Play module in hopes that it will be used to inform pre-service and in-service educators of the ways that teachers can and do abuse their authority. In addition to learning how to be an effective teacher, teacher candidates must equally learn what to avoid doing in the classroom, particularly how to not become an abusive teacher (Blase & Blase, 2004). Failing to equip pre-service teachers with ways to cope with realistic issues they will encounter in the classroom is a disservice not only to the teachers but to the students.

The presentation consists of 42 slides, some of which are title or transition slides. Included are facilitator’s notes, key terms, and handouts. The module is intended to take one and a half hours to complete; however, facilitators may adjust the material to lengthen or shorten the presentation.

Follow these steps in using the materials:

**Step 1.** Review the entire module and think about how it relates to your audience and yourself. Other resources may be used to enhance the learning experience. Each slide has been provided along with a description suggesting what to share and/or discuss with participants.

**Step 2.** Check the facilitator’s section on page 49 for a list of materials needed for the presentation, including links to videos.

**Step 3.** Ensure that the presentation environment is conducive to learning and discussions.
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Overview

This module presents information on authority abuse in the classroom in three sections. First, the definition of authority abuse is discussed and compared, including bullying behaviours and characteristics. Second, aspects of effective teaching are explored as a means of understanding what is important and needed to be a good teacher. Finally, participants will be given practical suggestions for attaining and maintaining authority in the classroom. Effective teachers proactively maintain a balance in their lives, are aware of and avoid abusive behaviour, and acknowledge and take seriously the responsibility that accompanies teaching.

Objectives

When the module is completed, participants will be able to:

- Gain an understanding of authority abuse
- Discover their own authority teaching style
- Discover the importance of a balanced lifestyle
- Learn how to manage stress and set limits
- Learn classroom management techniques
- Reflect on their teaching philosophy
The song, ‘Another brick in the wall’ by Pink Floyd is embedded in the first slide. After the song ends, ask the participants if they know the song. Next ask if they are aware of the song’s meaning. In the event that the participants have not fully understood the meaning behind the song, explain the song to the participants as it relates to the presentation.

Song’s meaning:

The song is about the limitations imposed on people by authorities as they try to make their way in life. The protagonist builds a wall around himself as a shield from a world that hurts him, and the authorities are just another brick in his wall. His mother, his cruel teachers, and his lost father compound the boy’s fears and help him build up his wall. The boy eventually builds the wall so tall that no one can get in; however, the boy can’t get out.

The objective for any teacher is to tear down the walls that their students build, not to become another brick that further isolates them from the world.
Share about your professional and personal experiences and explain why you are conducting the module. Also, make sure to let the audience know why they should listen to you: why are you a good ambassador for this topic?

Ask the participants why they have chosen to attend the workshop.

Who are you? (What level are you teaching?)

Why did you choose to come to the workshop?
This slide gives the participants an opportunity to share their perspectives on how teachers can abuse their authority. The responses can create good discussion amongst the participants.

Remind participants that researchers too have had difficulty when defining bullying and, because of this difficulty, teachers may have difficulty recognizing their own actions as bullying.

After the audience has shared and discussed their definitions of authority abuse, share McEvoy’s and Olweus’ definitions regarding bullying and compare the two.

Olweus’ definition states that bullying is an abusive treatment by an individual, which occurs through use of force or coercion. The behaviour is unprovoked aggression that is repetitive and done with the intent to harm.

There is one distinct difference between Olweus’ and McEvoy’s definitions that you should mention and that is the absence of provocation on the part of the victim, as stated by Olweus. McEvoy’s definition does not mention that teacher abuse is unprovoked as many students may provoke teachers on a daily basis. However, regardless of provocation, teachers are not justified in using their position of power to bully students.
The following video is used to demonstrate authority abuse in schools. There is one instance, during the video, where a teacher pushes one student as she tries to attack another student.

This is a good opportunity to discuss the teacher’s actions, offering an opportunity to relate to the previous discussion about defining authority abuse.

Questions:
*Does the teacher recognize his actions as bullying?*

*Did the teacher have a right to push the student?*

*Note: Some of the participants may not perceive the teacher’s actions as inappropriate. Note: If the student had fallen and hit her head and sustained an injury, the teacher would have been held liable in the eyes of the law.*

Review the characteristics of adult bullies with the participants. It is suggested that you focus on a few characteristics and share stories to demonstrate the characteristics.

Refer to the facilitator’s section: Effective Teacher vs. Teacher Bullies (p. 24)

The final quote should be highlighted. In the workplace, adults may choose to leave their jobs, should they become a target; however, children must remain in their class with their abusive teacher.
This quote is a good way to highlight how teachers, especially new teachers, can feel overwhelmed in their careers.

Teaching
"It’s like having a hundred balls thrown at you all at once and someone just saying, ‘Catch!’"
Fourth Grade Teacher, New York, NY

This slide is the proposed solution should people feel overwhelmed in their teaching jobs.

Effective Teaching
is knowing which balls to catch.
Explain that the foundations of teaching are an outline for the next section of the module. Inform the audience that these topics will be covered in depth in the following slides.

Ask the question, “Why Teach?” However, the intent is not to have the participants answer the question. The follow-up question is, “Why do people choose to teach?”

Say to the participants, “You need to know why you are choosing this profession and consider if you are choosing it for the right reasons (not to mention, your future employers may ask what your teaching philosophy is. You should know it).

Summers off or having something to fall back on (mattress philosophy) are not the reasons you should choose to enter teaching. Your reasons must be worthwhile because they will get you through the tough times, not a summer that is potentially 10 months away.
This is one in-service teacher’s answer to the question, “Why teach?” Ask the participants, “What are your reasons for teaching?”

“I was always very angry with the way most of my teachers taught. I wanted to run a classroom that respected all students, broke down stereotypes, and prompted all styles of learning.”

Fifth-grade teacher, Berlin, CT

Welcome participants to answer the question.

Did you hear a call? Why have you chosen to be a teacher?
Tell the participants that teaching is a service industry. Then ask, “How many of you have ever gone to a restaurant, grocery store, or coffee shop and had bad service?”

Did you ever find yourself walking away saying, “I think that person needs to find a different line of work,” or “I’m never coming back here again”? Well some teachers have the same effect. The only difference, their students must return to them every day.
Tell the participants that teachers need to demonstrate caring. Getting to know one’s students, their likes, strengths, and weaknesses can demonstrate caring.

Find a mentor, someone who is not necessarily assigned to you (new mentorship program) but someone with whom you are comfortable, whom you admire, and from whom can learn. Selecting a mentor is not necessarily a decision you make right away. Watch and see the teachers who do it right, who are respected for the right reasons, and who share your teaching philosophy.

Custodians, librarians, secretaries, etc.: Get to know these people; having professional relationships with them will provide you with insight that would not normally be available to you.
The first case is to be done with the audience. Read the case to the audience and then invite participants to comment. The main point of the case is how the teacher could have prevented making the comment. Discuss how the teacher was overwhelmed, which led to exhaustion and the comment, and how he or she could have balanced things better in his or her life.
Remind participants that stress is a part of teaching. However, stress is not the issue, even higher levels of stress. The issue is having an inability to cope with stress.

Teachers who are unable to cope with stress tend to get frustrated and overwhelmed and what results can be hard on them, their students, fellow staff, and their family.

Discuss the various ways of coping with managing stress. In the facilitator’s notes you will find a breathing exercise. The exercise only takes a few minutes and teaches participants how to breathe properly.
Revitalization means taking part in purposeful activities to re-energize. Re-energizing will help you to be an effective teacher. If you do not take the time to revitalize, you will ultimately shorten your career and potentially act in a manner towards your peers and your students that could have lasting negative consequences.
This is an example of how one in-service teacher sets limits.

Being able to cope and deal with the stress and workload in your career will be made easier if you are able to set limits. When teachers set limits, it allows them to focus on the students and their learning.

We all need limits. Finding your limits and not exceeding them, although difficult, is a necessary part of teaching effectively. When you are able to recognize and say no to the things that take away from your teaching you can focus on becoming an effective educator.
Read the case study and then ask participants to break out into groups of two or three to discuss and answer the questions. Give the participants about 5 minutes, depending on time, to answer the questions.

This situation is difficult. It would not be advisable to discontinue the arrangement made with the mentor teacher; however, in subsequent years you may decide not to team-teach with your mentor. Another approach that a teacher can do is to model more appropriate behaviour, talk about respect in the classes, and treat students with respect. These actions may not only influence the students; they may even influence your mentor.
The following video demonstrates the potentially negative impact negative role models can have on children. You can discuss how this video relates to teaching. Teachers’ behaviours can influence their students to act in negative ways. A teacher abusing a particular student or students give students the idea that abuse is acceptable.

What you do as a leader in your classroom will be watched, remembered, and emulated. Stating something and expecting it is only part of leadership. You must live your philosophy. Students are very aware when teachers do not do as they say.
Refer to the ‘Teaching Tools Analogy’ in the facilitator’s notes section.
During this slide, you need to emphasize the importance of looking like a teacher, by dressing professionally. Tell the participants to dress in a way that separates them psychologically from students. Also, tell participants that they need to project confidence. If they are not confident, they should fake confidence. Breathing can help you remain calm. If you lose your cool in front of students, you may say or do something you will regret. It also will cause students to view you as having a lack of control; this loss of control will cause you to lose status with the students. When you make eye contact with a student and ask for verbal acknowledgement, you get non-verbal acknowledgement as well.
The passive teacher gives in and is taken advantage of. The authoritarian teacher is aggressive and uses power to take the power of others. The authoritative teacher stands his or her ground and teaches students to be in control.

Tell participants that rules are only good if they can be enforced. A quick explanation of your class rules are not enough; you must teach your rules as though they were part of your curriculum. Explain your rules thoroughly so that a student will feel foolish saying, “I didn’t know the rules” later. If you argue with students, you will lower your status; if you do not argue with students, you will be known as a teacher of action. If you demonstrate that you will take action immediately, when needed, students will respect your authority. Remember to be respectful and fair.
Refer to the facilitator’s notes for the Broken Window Theory and the Déjà vu Effect.
I disagree...

“Good teacher’s refuels so that they don’t burn out enabling them to continually light the way.”

Teacher Burnout

When teachers become burned out they may not be aware of their cynical and depressed state. They may begin to view the world through a negative lens and become critical of everyone and everything, including their students. (Sheils’ Work 2000)

Thank you
Questions?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Teachers</th>
<th>Vs.</th>
<th>Teacher Bullies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Let students know they care.</td>
<td>Let students know who’s the boss.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher self-control.</td>
<td>Exert their control.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately counsel chronic discipline problems.</td>
<td>Publically humiliate chronic misbehaviours.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are aware of the power they wield over their students; choose their words and actions carefully.</td>
<td>Wield their power recklessly, frequently resorting to anger and intimidation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help all students feel successful.</td>
<td>Punish students for being unsuccessful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address misbehaviour.</td>
<td>Attack the character of the student who misbehaves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See each student’s uniqueness.</td>
<td>Compare children to one another.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat all students with respect.</td>
<td>Make it clear that not all students deserve respect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight good behaviour</td>
<td>Make examples of poor behaviour.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be proactive; create classroom environments that minimize students misbehaviour.</td>
<td>Be reactive; blame students for the lack of order in their classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators Educate.</td>
<td>Bullies Humiliate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Breathing and relaxation exercises help combat stress. Breathing can be done anytime, anywhere. When breathing is done correctly it can be therapeutic and have noticeable health benefits. Relaxation exercises allow you to relieve tension in your muscles. By adding these exercises to your daily routine, you can greatly increase your health and reduce your stress.

### Exhalation breathing

Exhalation breathing slows your breathing to help calm you down.

- Lie on your back with your arms at your sides.
- As you begin to breathe in, raise your arms towards the ceiling (elbows bent). Move your arms all the way up and over your head as you inhale.
- Reverse the order: breathe out (exhale) slowly and smoothly as you return your arms to your sides.

* After you have done this exercise several times, slowly inhale and exhale without moving your arms. You can do this exercise for 10 minutes or longer -- it's up to you.

### Deep Breathing

Deep breathing provides extra oxygen to the blood and causes the body to release endorphins, which are naturally occurring hormones that re-energize and promote relaxation.

- Slowly inhale through your nose, expanding your abdomen before allowing air to fill your lungs.
- Reverse the process as you exhale. Do this exercise for three to five minutes whenever you feel tense.

* If you are not accustomed to deep breathing, you may begin to feel light headed. The lightheadedness happens because your body is not used to taking in so much oxygen.

### Progressive Relaxation

This is an exercise that will help to release the tension in your muscles.

- Sit or lie down on your back in a comfortable, quiet room. Close your eyes.
- Make tight fists, hold for five seconds, then relax your hands. Do this step three times. Pay attention to the different sensations of tension and relaxation.
- Repeat step 2 with all of your muscle groups: arms, shoulders, chest, abdomen, back, hips, thighs, lower legs, and feet.

* At first, the exercise may take about 20 minutes. With practice, it should only take five minutes.
## DISCIPLINE THEORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE BROKEN WINDOW THEORY</th>
<th>THE DÉJÀ VU EFFECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The theory was established by criminal psychologists and played a large part in turning New York City around in the 1990’s, from a very dangerous city to one of the safest to walk around in the world.</td>
<td>When you teach the rules and consequences to your class, you will teach them so well that when a student breaks the rules the consequences are a déjà vu experience. Let students know what is going to happen should they break the rules before any rules are broken. This procedure will be a deterrent for students. Students will come to believe that it is not worth trying to break the rules, although some will try. When students break rules, make sure that you follow through. Remember to be consistent, respectful, and fair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The theory states, if someone throws a rock through a window in a neighbourhood, and it gets ignored, even though it seems like no big deal, pretty soon people will come to believe that the building is not important and another rock will be thrown through the window, or a fence will be broken, and things begin to deteriorate quickly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the window gets fixed immediately, it prevents things from spreading. Similarly, when rules are broken and the infraction is addressed immediately, a message is sent and authority is established.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## DEMONSTRATIONS

### BALLOON ANALOGY

Materials: two balloons – two extremes

The analogy describes the two extreme teaching styles, passive and authoritarian.

With the first balloon, you blow very little air into it and tie it. Then you explain to the audience that with a deflated balloon you can do pretty much whatever you want to it, much like a passive teacher. A passive teacher may react but students are not too concerned about the consequences, as passive teachers are not consistent and what threats they do make are usually hollow. Passive teachers are just push overs. Note: you can give the deflated balloon to the participants for them to pass around.

Now, an authoritarian teacher is much different than a passive teacher (Blow some air into the balloon). You cannot do anything; this person is so strict noise can get you in trouble (blow some more air into the balloon). Punishment is handed out regularly and enforced completely (blow more air in the balloon). Students are constantly waiting for when the authoritarian teacher will fly off the handle (blow more air in the balloon). Each student hopes he or she will not become the next target (more air). Learning in this class is very difficult because, if students don’t do things the way they are expected (blow into the balloon – should be rather large now and notice how the audience reacts when you hold the huge balloon close to them), THEY WILL GET IT! At this point, pop the balloon but make sure that you are not too close to anyone.

After the demonstration, ask students why they were afraid of the balloon. Now ask them to empathize with the students who find themselves in the class of an extremely authoritarian teacher.

### TEACHING TOOLS ANALOGY

Materials: 6 small Styrofoam squares, tooth picks, and a hammer

The analogy describes how tools can be used to build students up or tear them down.

Prior to the ‘Building with Tools’ slide on page 19, ask one of the participants to quietly build a small box using the materials mentioned above. When you reach the right slide, ask the participant to bring you the box. After you have the box placed on a table in front of you and the hammer in your hand, you will explain how a teaching tool can be misused. The following information will help:

A teaching tool used by many educators is humour. “Humor is one of the most powerful tools teachers have.” It can be used to build students up or tear them apart. Appropriate humour can encourage students, defuse situations, diminish anxiety, and cultivate positive learning environments. However, humour used at the expense of a student, intentionally or not, can have negative consequences. A teacher can use humour as a weapon. Another effective way to attack a targeted student is with the use of sarcasm. The word “sarcasm” is a Greek term that means, “to tear flesh.” It is associated with words such as “cutting,” “ridicule,” and “mockery.” Dark sarcasm is intended to inflict pain on the recipient. Time-outs are another tool that can be misused. The intention of time-out is to adjust behaviour, not to humiliate or punish a child.

Next, describe how useful the hammer is as a tool. You will state how the hammer was used to build a nice square box and how the hammer can also be used to destroy the box. Smash the box.
Video Links

Caught on tape links:

Teacher pushes student:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqi5qKDKSBE

Teacher beats student:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wxp7JIAmeaI

Student berated by teacher:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ8CiHFqhF8&feature=related

Teacher cuts off girl’s hair:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Aq1WeS6VCs&feature=related

Children see children do:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvPhtPv2KGg
Some teachers use ridicule, intimidation, and fear to maintain classroom discipline. The reasons may be because they were bullied, they’re egotistical, or because they react out of frustration and fail to reflect or seek support for stress.

**Foundations of Teaching**
- Why Teach?
- People Skills
- Relationships
- Stress Management
- Setting Limits
- Revitalization
- Leadership

**Stress Coping Strategies**
- Leisure
- Exercise
- Breathing
- Meditation
- Entertainment

**Tools of Teaching**
The way a teacher uses their teaching tools, such as time out, detention, sarcasm etc. can contribute to or cause damage to student education and wellbeing.

**Teacher Tips**
- Dress the part
- Confident/In Control Personna
- Breathe to maintain control
- Eye Contact to establish authority and understanding

**Rules**
- Limit the number of Rules you choose for your students
- TEACH Rules thoroughly don’t just recite them
- Don’t argue about the Rules with students – but make sure they are fair
- Consequences must matter to students to be effective

“Bullying students is like shooting fish in a barrel: as a captive audience, students can neither fight nor flee.” Parsons, 2005
CHAPTER 4: REFLECTION

The Power Play workshop, to date, has been presented on three separate occasions to pre-service educators. To determine the effectiveness of the workshop and to receive feedback for further development, the workshop was delivered to participants of the 2010 Queen’s Education Conference and the Queen’s Professional Development Workshop Week for B.Ed. candidates. In reviewing the feedback, each criticism was considered and applied to subsequent presentations to increase the effectiveness of the Power Play workshops.

Project Reflection

I was invited to speak at the 2010 Queen’s Education Conference on January 30th and 31st. The conference hosts students from universities across Ontario and provides them with opportunities to explore issues related to teaching and education. My role was to develop and facilitate a professional development workshop based on my research topic, authority abuse in the classroom. I was asked to present on two of the three days to 122 pre-service teachers in all.

My first presentation took place on the Saturday. I was fortunate to have my supervisor, Dr. John Freeman, sit in to provide additional feedback on the workshop. The allotted time for the workshop was one hour and 30 minutes. Prior to the conference, I met with Dr. Freeman to receive advice regarding my PowerPoint slides and overall presentation, to ensure I would meet the timeline. The feedback that I received from Dr. Freeman at that time resulted in a tailored down version to the original and a stronger focus regarding the presentation theme.
Queen’s Education Conference: Day 1

The piloting of the workshop had as one of its goals to elicit feedback to further develop the effectiveness of the project’s message. My initial presentation was well received by students; however, the feedback suggested that certain adjustments were needed. Unfortunately, given the short time between presentations, I was only able to make minor alterations for the workshop the subsequent day. Following the workshop, Dr. Freeman suggested that I ensure there was time for questions at the end of the presentation, to provide additional clarification on the material, if needed. He reserved his formal feedback until after the conference.

To improve the effectiveness of the workshop, I provided students with a questionnaire and requested their feedback. The second part of the questionnaire asked students to offer what they felt were the strengths of the workshop, including suggested changes and benefits. I was pleased to receive 69 questionnaires from the first workshop.

The suggestions were a combination of constructive criticism on the content of the workshop and the way the material was presented. The suggestions to improve the presentation of the workshop included:

- Talk louder and more clearly articulate words when addressing the group.
- Move around the room and interact with the audience; don’t remain behind the podium.
- Reduce the number of words on the PowerPoint slides.

The following were student suggestions to develop the content of the workshop and the ways in which its message was relayed to the students:

- Provide bullying resources.
• Narrow the focus of the workshop. ¹
• Reword certain questions for clarity.
• Ensure that you are not being negative.
• Possibly use more humour in the presentation.
• Make the workshop more engaging and exciting.
• Provide the audience with more interaction earlier on.
• Limit the number of activities currently in the workshop.
• Discuss why control is important in the classroom vs. abuse.
• Provide more information on dealing with bullying situations.
• Provide more information on how to use power properly in the classroom.
• Provide students with more practical information, instead of written information.

The feedback given by the students during the first workshop provided much opportunity to reflect on the next steps in developing the Power Play workshop.

However, making major adjustments to the workshop was not feasible given the amount of time before the next workshop. The only adjustments possible were the suggestions for improving the way the material was presented and the addition of two videos that would increase participant engagement.

The adjustments for the second day were as follows:
• Speaking louder and improving word articulation.
• Attempting to use more humour during the workshop.
• Adding two videos to assist in engaging the audience.
• Asking if there were any questions at the end of the presentation.
• Venturing out from behind the podium and interacting with the audience.
• Approaching the questions differently and combining certain questions according to theme.

The questionnaire also asked students to rate whether they believed the workshop to be important and beneficial for pre-service and in-service educators, if it was

¹ These are, in all cases, summary observations and not direct quotes.
judgmental, and if it should be made obligatory. The following specific questions were asked:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How important do you think the workshop is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel this workshop will be:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbeneficial to pre-service teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat beneficial to pre-service teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you feel this workshop should be:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An option for in-service teachers to take?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service teachers should not have to take this workshop?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you feel the power play workshop is judgmental?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 1: How important do you think the workshop is?** The first question was rated from very important to not very important. Many of the students stated that the workshop was either very important or important, while only a small group or students believed it was somewhat important.

**Question 2: I feel this workshop will be extremely beneficial – unbeneficial?** For the second question, which was rated between unbeneficial for pre-service teachers to extremely beneficial to pre-service teachers, the majority of the students stated the workshop was beneficial, or extremely beneficial. A small percentage of students said it was somewhat beneficial.

**Question 3: Do you feel this workshop should be an option/mandatory /unnecessary?** The third question was strongly weighed in favour of the workshop being an option; almost all students believed the workshop should be mandatory.

**Question 4: Do you feel the workshop was judgmental?** In the final rated question, again, the vast majority of students believed the workshop was not judgmental. Very few students stated the workshop was judgmental.
Queen’s Education Conference: Day 2

The student feedback from the second day was similar to what was suggested following the first presentation. The reason for this similarity was a lack of time to make major changes to the workshop. The suggestions to improve the presentation of the workshop included:

- Interact more with the audience.
- Narrow the focus of the workshop.
- Provide more information on how teachers can bully students (demonstrated through later videos that were added to the workshop as well as case studies).
- Reduce the amount of words on the PowerPoint slides.
- Give strategies for progressive discipline, types of meaningful consequences (later suggested that each child is different and that consequences needed to be individualized as they must be meaningful).
- Discuss how to be an authority without being an authoritarian (authoritarian is not the issue; it is abusing power).
- Make the presentation less teacher-directed and more student-centered (case studies involved the students in the conversations about what they should or could do in certain situations).
- Give more information on teacher burnout and how to prevent it.
- Provide examples of action – if you find yourself at your limit and a student is pushing your buttons the idea is to not get to your limit by maintaining a balance in your life – the reality is that you will not know when you are at your limit.
- Prompt discussion with case studies.
- Present the information in a more energetic manner.

The students received the same questionnaire as the group the previous day. The suggested changes from the students were similar to those of the previous participants.
Question 1: How important do you think the workshop is? The first question was rated from very important to not very important. Once again, many of the students stated that the workshop was either very important or important, with only a small group of students believed it was somewhat important.

Question 2: I feel this workshop will be extremely beneficial – unbeneficial? For the second question, which was rated between unbeneficial for pre-service teachers to extremely beneficial to pre-service teachers, the majority of students stated the workshop was beneficial or very beneficial. Once again, only a small percentage of students believed the workshop was somewhat beneficial.

Question 3: Do you feel this workshop should be an option/mandatory/unnecessary? The third question was strongly weighed in favor or the workshop being an option; many students also believed the workshop should be mandatory.

Question 4: Do you feel the workshop was judgmental? For the final rated question, the vast majority of students stated the workshop was not judgmental, only a small percentage stated that the workshop was judgmental. A few students did not answer.

Strengths of the workshops

Strengths offered by students regarding the workshop were plentiful. Many of the statements made by participants of both workshops were similar. Certain comments demonstrated that the material and the way in which it was presented resonated with participants. The general strengths of the workshop mentioned in the feedback were the use of metaphors, quotes, audience involvement in the forms of discussion and reflection activities, passion and knowledge of the presenter, strategies for stress management,
teacher tips, the use of multi-media, and the overall organization of the presentation. Certain students commented that the content of the workshop was something they had not encountered previously, a realization that surprised them. Another statement that surfaced frequently was the idea of questioning how teachable teachers are and the consequences for students and educators should they be closed off to learning. This statement, although not the focus of the workshop, was one that struck a cord with pre-service teachers. The students also appreciated workshop examples and discussions being tied to real-life experiences. Making examples relevant to participants was done to provide support for the theoretical content of the workshop and to demonstrate how certain strategies can be applied and the consequences if they are not.

**Benefits for Participants**

The workshop was developed with the hope that its participants would benefit from the information shared. Some benefits were similar to those listed in the strengths of the workshop. However, certain students shared that the workshop altered the way they viewed education, solidified their teaching philosophy, influencing the style of teaching they will adopt, and provided greater insight into the teacher-student relationship. The power of a teacher’s word was one comment that came up repeatedly. This revelation made the pre-service teachers increasingly aware of the power differential between teacher and pupil and the potential consequences should words be spoken without considering their impact. One of the comments that resonated with me, which was supported by similar comments, was that, “other workshops talked about the student and this one talked about the importance of me.” This comment made me think about teacher
education and the need to instruct future educators to take proper care of their well being, enabling them to take better care of their students.

**Post-Workshop Reflection**

Following the conference, I interpreted all of the data from the questionnaires and reflected on how to more effectively convey the messages of the workshop. It was evident from the feedback that I needed to combine various topics, which were too similar to remain independent, such as the stress management and revitalization sections of the presentation. Another comment that surfaced was that the workshop description provided for potential attendees did not match the content of the workshop. The reason for this divergence, I believe, was the addition of the stress and classroom management sections of the presentation. The description of the workshop may have led participants to anticipate a presentation based mostly in theory and not necessarily one that included practical applications to proactively prevent authority abuse as an educator.

The opening of the workshop was also a concern. It was stated that more engagement was necessary. The lack of engagement could be attributed to the length of the introduction. In response, during the second workshop I elicited participation sooner, by asking the participants to define authority abuse, resulting in debate, prior to providing a definition based on the current literature. The possibility of role-play was also considered, as a way to more effectively engage the participants. It was thought that using a model based on “safe teen” that resembled the three teaching styles that are discussed in the workshop—passive, authoritarian, and authoritative—would be a way to have members of the audience experience what each role feels like. The suggestion to use case studies as a means of engaging and discussing current authority abuse scenarios was also
promising. The condensing of the PowerPoint slides and their content was also something that would be adjusted for future presentations. The addition of humour was something that I would strive to employ in the workshops; however, the risk of being unnatural should humour be forced would need to be considered.

After compiling the data and reflecting on the changes that needed to take place to improve the workshop, I met with Dr. Freeman to gain additional insight into the Power Play workshop. Dr. Freeman’s suggestions concurred with many of the suggestions that were made by the workshop participants. His suggestions were:

- Inspire them!
- Keep the introduction short.
- Narrow focus, don’t over teach participants.
- Provide a more succinct definition of bullying.
- Consider cutting, not combining, material by determining what is more important.
- Implement a case study approach into the activity phase of the workshop.
- Try to use humour as a way to talk about the serious issue of bullying.
- Possibly have varying levels of the Power Play workshop providing a separation of the material.
- Know what your message is and effectively convey it.

Inspiring and engaging the audience more seemed to be a constant theme throughout the feedback. In reflecting on this advice, I compiled various news broadcasts to create a video demonstrating the various forms of authority abuse that are taking place in schools. The video was intended to serve as a way to engage the audience and act as a catalyst for further discussion regarding their personal and literature-based definitions of authority abuse. It was the hope that the use of visual media would not only shorten the workshop introduction but also hook the audience, increasing their desire to learn more.
To make the workshop more succinct, I cut out the revitalization material and replaced it with a case study followed by stress management skills. The leadership section of the workshop also began with a case study. I went through the presentation and trimmed out various information that could be addressed, should a discussion warrant it, but did not necessarily need to be included in the slides. I decided to change the activities/questions that I combined in my second workshop to moments of reflection. I did not feel that it was necessary to have students discuss the questions as long as they took a moment to consider them and possibly write them down for further reflection. In the stress section of the workshop, I asked the students to reflect on how well they deal with stress, their two greatest stressors, and how they can lower their stress. In the next slide, I provided them with ways they could reduce stress in their lives. In consideration of time, I decided to omit the role-play but still included the information from the safe teen philosophy in the assertiveness slide in the teaching tips section and related it to the teaching styles previously introduced.

The message of the workshop, as Dr. Freeman had stated, is that teachers can abuse their authority and be a bully. This message was relayed to the participants through the addition of a video, the case studies, and the stress and revitalization tips. The section on assertiveness also discussed the need to be assertive with students and neither passive nor aggressive, as these personality types can lead to bullying behaviour.

**Queen’s Professional Development Workshop**

The Queen’s University B.Ed. student participants are a more diverse group, some of whom have considerably more life experience, than had the undergraduate participants at the Queen’s Education Conference. Also, the B.Ed. candidates were nearing the end of
their B.Ed. year, and many of them might soon be in-service teachers, a fact that might prompt more reflection regarding the teaching style they would adopt. I was interested to find out what the difference in feedback would be between the groups, if any.

As part of the Queen’s University Faculty of Education’s professional development week, guest speakers were asked to provide workshops on various topics related to the field of education. I was asked to present my Power Play workshop to 90 plus B.Ed. students. Unfortunately, all workshops were not attended very well. As a result, approximately 50 percent of students who signed up were in attendance. The low numbers resulted in even less feedback from participants. For the purpose of validity the same questionnaire was used for the third Power Play workshop. With the changes to the workshop, I was curious to see how feedback would vary.

Question 1: How important do you think the workshop is? The first question was rated from very important to not very important. The responses were similar to the other workshops; with the majority students stated the workshop was important and very important.

Question 2: I feel this workshop will be extremely beneficial – unbeneﬁcial? For the second question, which was rated between unbeneﬁcial for pre-service teachers to extremely beneﬁcial to pre-service teachers, a very small percentage stated the workshop was somewhat beneﬁcial, while the majority of students stated the workshop was beneﬁcial or extremely beneﬁcial.

Question 3: Do you feel this workshop should be an option/mandatory/unnecessary? The third question was strongly weighed in favour of the workshop being an option, although many students also stated the workshop should be mandatory.
Question 4: Do you feel the workshop was judgmental? The vast majority of students believed the workshop was not judgmental, while only a few students believed it was.

The suggested changes provided by the B.Ed. students were as follows:

- Provide warning prior to showing video.
- Prefer classroom setting to lecture hall setting.
- Discuss more authoritative ways of establishing authority.
- Provide more specific strategies of how to combat power differential.
- Increase the pace of workshop and consider trimming down content.
- Include case studies involving classroom management without abusing power.

It is evident from the feedback that the presentation is still in need of revision. The length of the presentation and possible pacing changes will be considered when revising prior to the next presentation. The suggestion regarding strategies to assist teachers in establishing authoritative authority in their classroom is something that I am interested in adding to the workshop. In reflecting on this suggestion, I believe that the best way to introduce this concept would be through a case study involving all three styles: passive, authoritarian, and authoritative. This activity would provide teacher candidates with an opportunity to see how each style is used in the classroom and its effectiveness and potential pitfalls. A critical look at the teaching styles would provide strategies for best practices in dealing with the power relationship between teachers and their students. The setting of the workshop is something that should be considered; however, availability is always a concern and may play a role in the location of the workshop. Lastly, the content of the video was potentially upsetting. The warning that was provided prior to playing the clip will be made more explicit in future presentations.
Strengths: B.Ed. Participants

Once again, discussion was viewed as a real strength of the workshop. Many students enjoyed the discussions that explored the power dynamic within the classroom. The use of multi-media, metaphors, and relatable examples was also listed frequently. Surprisingly, the discussion on stress management was mentioned more than classroom management strategies in the feedback provided. The participants expressed more of an interest in managing stress than classroom management strategies, which was different than previous participants.

Benefits for B.Ed. Participants

As in the benefits stated by previous participants, the B.Ed. students also picked up on the fact that the workshop focused on the needs of the teacher and not solely on the needs of students. In my experience, teacher education tends to focus predominantly on students’ needs; rarely, if ever, does a pre-service educator learn strategies for self-care, a crucial component in preventing teacher burnout. The B.Ed. students also commented how the content of the workshop caused them to reflect on the teaching style they wished to adopt. They also discussed the need to be proactive, in taking care of their needs, and not reactive when they misused their power or experienced a shift in their teaching philosophy. The need to be aware when interacting with students was another listed benefit, one that would enable the participants to be constantly reflective of the impact their actions and/or words could have. These benefits might enable these future teachers to affect their students more positively as they build solid relationships founded on trust and respect. With the new sense of awareness, the B.Ed. students would have a greater
potential to create environments that are nurturing and safe, allowing students the freedom to learn.

The feedback indicates the main benefit of the workshop was that participants, as pre-service educators, are entitled to consider their own needs, and in doing so may achieve a balance both professionally and personally. Participants realized there were dangers in not achieving a life balance, dangers for themselves and those they lead. The feedback received from the three groups was quite similar. The B.Ed. candidates confirmed what the undergraduates had previously expressed.

**Future Changes to Power Play**

Since receiving feedback from workshop participants and Dr. Freeman, and reflecting on the feedback, I have decided in the future to include case studies that consider the three teaching styles, based on Baumrind’s (1967) parenting styles: Permissive, Authoritarian, and Authoritative, and a possible addition of different authority styles based on Raven and French (1960): Reverent, Positional, Expert, and Reward. The opportunity to explore different types of authority will generate more discussion on teaching styles and best practices. The teacher communication section, based on the use of body language and tone of voice, is a section that warrants development. Lastly, the fact that the workshop is for the benefit of teachers, not just students, needs to be emphasized more.

**Conclusion**

The heart of the ‘Power Play’ program’s message is that it is not solely that teachers have the responsibility to care for their students but an equal responsibility to care for themselves. When teachers take care of their needs and those of their students,
they ensure they will not react aggressively to their students but respond in a caring manner. It is the well-being of both the students and the teacher that is of concern; to neglect either one leads to abuse.

Too often people stand idly by and condone the hurtful actions of others by choosing to remain silent and not act. This project was inspired by my experiences and the stories that I heard working in schools while attaining my Bachelor of Education. Although I may have stood by while I was a teacher candidate, this project has broken my silence. It is my hope that the project's message will be heard by all who are entering or currently working with children in the school system. It is the responsibility of all educators to stand up against the abuse of power in schools.

*You are not only responsible for what you say, but also for what you do not say.*

Martin Luther King
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