

NFHS Teachers Bullied By Students, Parents

Kailey Cota

The names of teachers in this article have been changed for privacy purposes.

"I've had parents who have told me I'm racist - which is interesting because I'm actually married to a black man and have children who are different races..." said Mrs. Suzanne Smith, teacher at Nation Ford.

Results of a recent faculty-wide survey show that most NFHS teachers say they have been bullied multiple times - some on a regular basis - at work. 29 percent of teachers and faculty say verbal assaults come from parents, 24 percent feel it comes from bosses, 14 percent feel that students are verbal bullies, and 8 percent of verbal bullying stems from coworkers at the school. Also, many teachers stated that multiple sources have been the cause of bullying at one point or another.

"They [parents] don't see a problem with being really upfront and saying horrible things without knowing the whole story or without knowing me as a person. They're things that you just shouldn't accept in the workplace; it's not right - it's disrespectful," continued Mrs. Smith.

The problem of teachers experiencing bullying is nothing new, and goes well beyond NFHS. According to the US Department of Education, one out of five teachers surveyed say they have been verbally abused on the job, and one out of 10 say they have been physically threatened. Another one out of 20 have been physically attacked.

Mrs. Smith said that once an angry parent

ing. They believe increasing anxiety, a culture of competitiveness and loneliness, and a failure on the administration's part to realize when they're dealing with a personality disorder all create pressure that parents take out on the student's teacher.

"To be a confident parent requires, among other things, that the rate of change be slow and that the choices for children be few," Robert Evans and

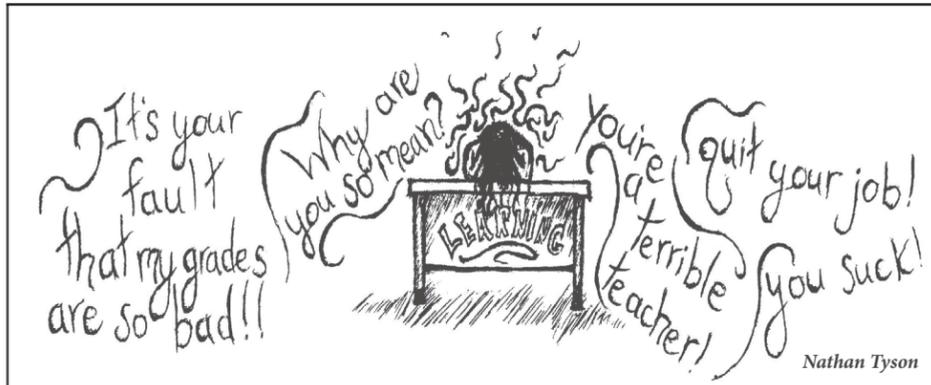
Michael G. Thompson claim for

The *Independent School Magazine*. However, everyone knows that life has become fast-paced with technology and higher sets of requirements at school. Parents want their children to become anything they want, and, "Their confidence for how to raise them is in sharp decline," said Robert Evans and Michael G. Thompson. "In general, I have parents who are upset about grades and things like that and automatically go toward it be-

ing the teacher's fault and don't always even talk to their children first," Mrs. Smith said.

The second contributor to the rise of parent to teacher bullying is "a culture of competitiveness and loneliness" among parents.

"What they do have is a willingness to advocate for their children... and a tendency toward



Nathan Tyson

"came in immediately and just started verbally attacking me, curse words and everything else."

From surveys from the 2007-2008 school year to more recent surveys from 2012 and 2014, reports on teachers being bullied have increased. The *Independent School Magazine* says there are three major contributors to the rise of parent to teacher bully-

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advocacy can lead to ferocious overreactions."

"Too often, it takes months of parental misbehavior for administrators to recognize that they are dealing with serious psychopathology that will not yield to normal intervention," they continue. Failure on the administration's part to realize when they're dealing with a personality disorder can allow stress to be taken out on teachers in what the *Independent School Magazine* considers bullying.

Mrs. Smith perfectly sums up a solution to this in one word: "Communication. When communication fails, we have a problem."

Also, 60 percent of 1,500 teachers who responded to a survey completed by National Association of School-

masters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) reported that abusive comments have been posted about them online by parents or students.

"I got an email one night... from an anonymous student.

It just said that basically I was a terrible teacher, that everyone hated me, and that they were going to get me 'voted out of the school', they were going to get me fired..." said Mr. Robert Jones, teacher at Nation Ford.

Can there ever be an end to bullying or any complete solution?

"Realistically, I just think you're dealing with too many different

"There are days you wonder if you can keep doing this..."

types of people, and there's just not enough time to get us all to understand each other. But I think the solution is for us all to try to educate kids - whether we're the teachers or parents - on respect," Mrs. Smith said.

People have chances every day to practice respect, she believes.

"I think we should take opportunities like the election to

say we can disagree, but we have to do so tactfully and respectfully. By ingraining that in generations to come and teaching it, we'll do it ourselves," said Mrs. Smith.

Bullying can be stressful. Stats from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers conference states that about 40 percent of teachers quit in their first year.

"There are days you wonder if you can keep doing this because-- am I getting paid enough, am I getting enough respect, am I making enough of a difference..." says Mrs. Smith, "...and then of course you see that you are, and this is just part of the job, and every job probably has their issues."

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