

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD: SEXUAL ABUSE CLOAKED BY A TEACHING LICENSE

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Just like the story of Little Red Riding Hood tells, as she travels to see her grandmother:

She was surprised to find the cottage-door standing open, and when she went into the room, she had such a strange feeling that she said to herself:

'Oh dear! How uneasy I feel today, and at other times I like being with grandmother so much.'

She called out: 'Good morning,' but received no answer; so she went to the bed and drew back the curtains. There lay her grandmother with her cap pulled far over her face, and looking very strange.

'Oh! grandmother,' she said, 'what big ears you have!'

'All the better to hear you with, my child,' was the reply.

'But, grandmother, what big eyes you have!' she said.

'All the better to see you with, my dear.'

'But, grandmother, what large hands you have!'

'All the better to hug you with.'

'Oh! but, grandmother, what a terrible big mouth you have!'

'All the better to eat you with!' (Grimm, 2008).

Every day millions of children head out to school in the United States. They range from preschoolers to 12th graders, ages from 3 to 18 years. With lunch boxes, backpacks and even a hooded poncho now and then, they are sent out of their homes, eerily unaware of the lurking dangers that may await them.

Child Sexual Abuse is defined as: "Any sexual act between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one exerts power over the other...forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act. It also includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and communicating in a

sexual manner by phone or Internet. It is an agonizing and traumatic experience for its victim and a crime punishable by law" (The 5 Steps to Protecting Our Children, 2013).

With 4.5 million students currently in K-12 who have been sexually abused by an educator (Palmer, 2012), these atrocities are likely to impact students in every district in the United States (Associated Press, 2015). In "The sex offender no one suspects," Anne Kington details how the trust both the students and parents have for the teachers is "exactly what allows them to offend." Incredibly, during the trial of public opinion many such offenders are rallied as "excellent teachers" (Kington, 2014). Clearly, this is an oxymoronic comparison. One cannot be an excellent teacher and a child molester.

The frequency of the abuse can be easily accessed by a cursory search of the Internet. For example, "Teacher jailed for not reporting a colleague's alleged sex with student" (Berger, 2015).

The child was under 13 and the colleague had reason to know. In this case the accused, Michael Vucic, a middle school teacher, is accused of videotaping the child(ren) in sexual acts which transpired in his classroom. The judge that heard the case said she was "disheartened that the system let this child down" calling the case "devastating to children and the criminal justice system" (Berger, 2015).

Ernest Timmons, dean of students, at Westside High is alleged to have had a sexual relationship with a teen for the past two year (Amiker, 2015). This investigation lead to a series allegations of other felonious relationships within the same school including a coach, one Kenneth Anderson, Jr. who is alleged to have had sex with female students. Also, Clarence Thomas, a part time coach told the investigator

although he'd had sex with a student approximately 20 times, he thought she was 18 and had just made a "poor choice."

The sickening incidences of abuse are also noticed among special needs populations of children. In June of 2015, middle school special education teacher, Kelly Dan Williams, was accused of sexual assault of an 11 old child (Hope, 2016). They include both genders and often leave a next generation of victims. For example, Rebecca A. Boicelli, a former teacher in Redwood City, California conceived a child with a 16 year-old student. Joseph E. Hayes, a former principal in East St. Louis, Illinois, impregnated a 14 year-old child (Associated Press, 2015).

One of perhaps the most notorious pedophile educators is William James Vahey whose incidences of child molestation crossed continents from the United States to Managua to London and included over 90 boys ages 10 to 14 (Hines, 2014).

The evidence of educator sexual abuse is also prevalent in the courts across the country (Shakeshaft, 2003), for example:

- Henderson, NC: Board agrees to pay \$1.78 million to families of 17 children.
- Augusta, WI: Allegations of sexual assault of 12 year-old boy.
- Ann Arbor, MI: Male teacher assaults female student.
- Omaha, NE: Wrestling coach sentenced to 45 days for assault of student.
- Westminster, CO: Male softball coach gets 6 years in prison for sexual assault of 7 students.
- Bullhead City, AZ: Male teacher charged with sexual contact with 12 year-old. Teacher is registered sex offender in Florida.

- Charleston, WV: Female middle school math teacher charged with sexually abusing a 13 year-old child (Kington, 2014).

Unfortunately, these pedophiles do not enter the schools wearing a label or appearing out-of-place. They, like Vahey, are often “popular members of the staff with both parents and students...an index of sophistication...to abuse children (Hines, 2014).

In an unprecedeted and intense investigation by the Associated Press, findings included 2,570 educators whose teaching licenses were removed for allegations of sexual misconduct just between the years of 2001-2005 (Associated Press, 2015). Separate research by Kington (2014) reveals similar findings, indicating that only five to fifteen percent of abused children ever reveal the abuse. Furthermore, in 93 percent of child sexual abuse cases, the child knows the perpetrator (Douglas, 2005). The tools of the trade used by educational perpetrators include vast access to social medial. For example, one teaching assistant was proven to share “3,000 WhatsApp messages with a student during their relationship” (Kington, 2014). The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) suggests that children do not have the same understanding of stranger danger as an adult might. They advocate that it is “more beneficial to children to help them build the confidence and self-esteem they need to stay as safe as possible in any potentially dangerous situation they encounter rather than teaching them to be *on the lookout* for a particular type of person” (FAQ: Child Safety, 2012).

While much light has been shed over the past few years into the Roman Catholic Church’s scandals of 4,400 children abused over the last 50 plus years, until recently,

there has been comparatively minimal comprehension of the “extent of educator abuse”. With the discovery of over 2,500 cases of child sexual abuse by educators documented over a five year period with the actions against children ranging from “bizarre to sadistic” (Associated Press, 2015), clearly additional focus, support and resources must be given to combat the frequency of these crimes against children. Given the access that teachers (and other school personnel) have to children, grooming techniques are often used to lure the child and the surrounding community into the perpetrator’s lair.

According to (Child Sexual Abuse—It is Your Business, 2012), grooming is a method of building trust with a child and adults around the child in an effort to gain access to and time alone with her/him. However, they note that in extreme cases, offenders may use threats and physical force to sexually assault or abuse a child. While much light has been shed over the past few years into the Roman Catholic Church’s scandals of 4,400 children abused over the last 50 plus years, until recently, there has been comparatively minimal comprehension of the “extent of educator abuse” (Associated Press, 2015).

Most frequent, however, are subtle approaches to establish relationships with proximal family members. Often times, the perpetrator takes on a friendly role, befriending the victim, or the child’s family, increasing the opportunity that the time spent with the child is viewed as normal (The 5 Steps to Protecting Our Children, 2013). Initially perceptions begin as positive, “You don’t know whether it’s intentional, that this person is setting the kid up, or that she’s flirting, sending gifts and texts, then crosses boundaries. Either way, the kid is generally flattered” (Kington, 2014). Furthermore, in a school setting, perpetrators tend to exercise “institutional grooming” in order to play the role of gatekeepers of access, grooming criminal justice and other institutions (like

schools) into believing that they present no risk to children (The 5 Steps to Protecting Our Children, 2013).

The purpose of grooming is:

- To reduce the likelihood of a disclosure.
- To reduce the likelihood of the child being believed.
- To reduce the likelihood of being detected.
- To manipulate the perceptions of other adults around the child
 - (Child Sexual Abuse—It is Your Business, 2012).

There are over three million public school educators in the United States.

Thankfully, the vast majority are dedicated to their work of educating students.

However, with the number of documented abusive educators, children are clearly at tremendous risk, especially when one considers that academic studies estimate that only about ten percent of children report the abuse to someone who can help (Associated Press, 2015). Identification of educator predators spans the spectrum of educators. With current data indicating nearly 10 percent of students are sexually abused (Palmer, 2012), this issue is clearly one of epidemic proportions.

According to Shakeshaft (2003), the following table demonstrates the frequency of predation based on gender and ethnicity:

Educator Sexual Abuse Contact and Non-Contact

	% All	% Females	% Males	% White	% Black	% Latino	% Asian
Non-contact	8.7	9.7	7.6	7.9	10.8	11	1.8
Contact	6.7	7.6	6.2	5.5	9.1	9	1.8
Either or Both	9.6	10.3	8.8	8.4	12.3	12.2	1.8

To combat this epidemic violation of the most helpless citizens where 20% of the children victimized are molested before the age of eight years, it is critical that everyone know and respond to the following steps established by the Darkness to Light foundation (The 5 Steps to Protecting Our Children, 2013)

- Step 1: Learn the Facts
- Step 2: Minimize Opportunity
- Step 3: Talk About It
- Step 4: Recognize the Signs
- Step 5: React Responsibly

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In school settings the following table delineates the abusers by job, (Shakeshaft, 2003)

Percent of Abusers by Job

Job Title	Percent
Teacher	18
Coach	15
Substitute Teacher	13
Bus Driver	12
Teacher's Aide	11
Other School Employee	10
Security Guard	10
Principal	6
Counselor	5
Total	100

In school settings, all employees are mandated reporters. A mandated reporter is someone required to report reasonable suspicions of abuse (The 5 Steps to Protecting Our Children, 2013). Naturally, anyone can and should report abuse. There is some variance between state laws regarding the reporting period. However, if a child could be in danger, wherever or whenever, law enforcement should be called immediately.

Unfortunately, the perpetrators of sex crimes against children in school appear to be “everyday educators.” They include teachers and principals and school personnel alike who are often popular and regularly acclaimed for their work with children (Associated Press, 2015). Furthermore, 70 percent of perpetrators have 1 to 9 victims

while 30 percent victimize up to 40 children (The 5 Steps to Protecting Our Children, 2013). With an average of 500 convicted molesters each year, over 2,500 in 5 years according to the Associated Press's investigation, the likelihood of a molester working within the confines of any given school is remarkably high.

Much like the Brothers Grimm story of a small, helpless child fooled by a devious wolf, unfortunately, many children become prey to vicious molesters in their formerly comfortable and familiar and 'safe' surroundings. Often times the very places their parents send them off to each day, trusting that they are protected, can become danger zones children. Much like the wolf in grandmother's clothing, predators cloaked behind the façade of a teaching license, prey on the most vulnerable victims.

It is also related that once, when Red Riding Hood was again taking cakes to the grandmother, another wolf spoke to her, and tried to entice her from the path. Red Riding Hood, however, was on her guard, and went straight forward on her way, and told her grandmother that she had met the wolf, and that he had said 'good morning' to her, but with such a wicked look in his eyes, that if they had not been on the public road she was certain he would have eaten her up....and the grandmother saw what was in his thoughts (Grimm, 2008).

According to California attorney, Mary Jo McGrath, who has spent 30 years investigating abuse and misconduct in schools, "It doesn't matter if it's urban or rural or suburban. From my own opinion, I think every school district in the nation has at least one perpetrator" (Associated Press, 2015).

Is every parent's responsibility to ensure that his or her children are vigilantly shielded from predators. Unfortunately, one never knows where a molester may lurk.

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Much like the latter version of Little Red Riding Hood's character where she becomes suspicious of the wolf's intentions and flees to the safety of her grandmother (Grimm, 2008), parents must protect their children. For in the real world, such predatory wolves are more difficult to recognize. They are often cloaked by celebrated careers, social capital and perhaps even a teaching license.

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