

#BatteredTeacher

What Teachers Endure - and How We Can Protect and Support Them

Dr. Nakeyau Patterson

Inside this sample

Title and copyright pages, dedication, reading guidance, full-book contents, introduction, Chapter 1: The Lesson After the Incident, and supporting research-note pages.

Original pages i-vi, 1-12, and source-note pages 136-137 are included. The remaining chapters and resources listed in the contents are not part of this sample.

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*What Teachers Endure—
and How We Can Protect
and Support Them*

Dr. Nakeyau Patterson

RISING PRESS

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This book offers general information and proposed school practices. It does not provide an individual legal, medical, or employment determination. Use appropriate professional advice and the applicable emergency, school, and reporting procedures.

The research was checked through October 7, 2026. Sources and limitations appear in the research notes. Fictional situations are identified; attributed participant experiences come from published research.

Recognize, Protect, Respond, Repair, Prevent is the book's organizing framework. It is not presented as a validated intervention.

For teachers whose work deserves care,
and for the people prepared to make that care
practical.

How to Use This Book

Read the opening chapters to establish the distinctions the rest of the book relies on: describing conduct accurately, preserving fair accountability, and attending to student needs and teacher protection together.

Part II examines what happens when teachers ask for help and what the effects can carry into home and classroom life. Part III follows the response through families, colleagues, school leadership, and district responsibility. Part IV considers professional choices and the work required to make an institution's promises credible.

Teachers can use the practical language and questions to identify needs and seek the relevant support. Leaders and district officials can examine the decisions that require their authority. Parents and colleagues can identify actions suited to their role.

The resources at the end provide a reusable response record, witness guidance, and questions for reviewing incidents and school improvements. Use them with the school's approved procedures. The institution should coordinate its own response; the teacher should not become responsible for everyone else's tasks.

The classroom and meeting scenes are fictional illustrations. Numbered notes identify research and official guidance. Published participant experiences are attributed where used. The book separates findings from our interpretation and proposed practices.

For a shared reading, end each discussion by choosing an action within your authority, identifying what it requires, and setting a way to check whether it reached the people concerned.

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INTRODUCTION

The Next Lesson

The opening scene is fictional and illustrates the book's central problem. It is not an interview or an account of a particular teacher.

The lesson is still on the board.

A teacher stands beside a desk, looking at the materials prepared that morning. A student has threatened her. Another adult has helped move the student to a supervised space. The other children are waiting, and the teacher is trying to decide whether her voice will sound steady when she speaks.

She knows the class needs reassurance. She knows the student who made the threat needs a response from adults who can understand what happened and address it. She also knows she cannot concentrate on the lesson.

Someone asks whether she can manage until lunch.

She looks at the clock.

That question carries a decision: for now, the plan depends on her being able to continue.

What would change if someone first asked what she needed to be safe? What if there were already a person assigned to cover the class, a clear route for recording the incident, and a leader responsible for telling her what would happen next? What if the school's response made room for the needs of everyone involved?

This book begins at that moment, when a teacher needs more than an expectation that she will get through the day.

Teaching places people in close contact with other people's needs. There are misunderstandings to resolve, frustrated families to hear, lessons to improve, and children who need patient, repeated help. A teacher can accept those

responsibilities and still need protection from threats, humiliation, harassment, and violence.

Naming that need should make a useful conversation possible.

We need language precise enough to tell the difference between a parent raising a concern and a parent using intimidation. Between a leader giving difficult feedback and a leader degrading an employee. Between understanding a child's behavior and providing the support required to keep that child and the people around them safe.

Those distinctions matter because the response must fit the situation. A young child who loses control may need assessment, skilled assistance, and a carefully developed support plan. An adult who repeatedly threatens a teacher needs clear boundaries and an appropriate response to that conduct. In either case, the teacher's safety requires attention.

The title #BatteredTeacher names the person experiencing the harm. In this book, battered includes serious or repeated physical, verbal, and psychological harm in the work of teaching. It describes an experience; a teacher remains a person with expertise, relationships, choices, and a future.

The term teacher abuse is used here for conduct directed at teachers that involves violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, discriminatory degradation, or retaliation. The chapters also examine institutional decisions that allow harm to continue. Some situations involve one severe event. Others become clear through a pattern: the repeated message, the recurring humiliation, the request for assistance that never produces a workable response.

A fair evaluation belongs in a school. So does a process for investigating concerns about a teacher's conduct. Protecting teachers includes making those processes fair, specific, and free from intimidation. Accountability is stronger when people can raise concerns, answer allegations, and examine evidence without being degraded.

A response can protect a teacher or add another burden. Does the teacher receive help, or have to defend needing it? Is a threat examined, or reframed as a classroom-management failure? Does the school take over the work within its authority, or return it to the person harmed? The teacher's needs belong in the response alongside everyone else's.

A promise becomes useful when someone takes responsibility for carrying it out.

Parents have a place in this work. They can ask direct questions, expect their children to be treated fairly, and participate in addressing harmful behavior. Colleagues can offer a factual account of what they witnessed and practical help with the next part of the day. Leaders can use their authority to establish clear expectations, provide resources, and respond when those expectations are violated.

Teachers should be able to ask for those things without having to design the entire response themselves.

Throughout this book, we will return to five actions: recognize, protect, respond, repair, and prevent. They offer a way to examine a situation from the first recognition of harm through the changes needed afterward. Each action brings questions about responsibility. Recognizing a problem matters; identifying who can address it makes action possible.

We will also consider what happens when a teacher's trust has already been damaged. Returning to a classroom after a difficult experience may require more than reassurance. It may require evidence that assistance will arrive, that an agreed plan will be followed, and that a report will receive a fair hearing.

Some readers will be deciding whether to stay in teaching. Others will already have left. This book respects those decisions. A profession earns people's confidence through the conditions it provides and the commitments it keeps. An

invitation to return is meaningful when the person receiving it can see what has changed.

Students need adults who can devote attention to learning, relationships, and care. Teachers need conditions that make that work possible. School leaders, families, colleagues, and communities each hold part of the responsibility for creating those conditions.

Return to the teacher standing beside the desk. The lesson remains on the board, but the next step does not have to depend entirely on her ability to push through. Another adult can take responsibility. A plan can begin. Someone can return later and ask whether the promised support arrived.

PART I • Naming What Happens
CHAPTER 1

The Lesson After the Incident

The people, dialogue, and events in this chapter's classroom scenario are fictional. They illustrate decisions the book asks readers to examine.

At 10:17, Ms. Ellis looks down at the worksheet in her hand and realizes she has already read the same direction twice.

Across the room, a child is rubbing an eraser over one small spot until the paper begins to tear. Two classmates are whispering. Someone asks whether they still have to finish the page.

Ten minutes earlier, a student pushed a chair aside and threatened to hurt Ms. Ellis. She called for assistance. A staff member arrived and took the student to a supervised room. The doorway is clear now. The chair is upright.

Ms. Ellis has been told someone will check back.

She puts the worksheet on her desk. She can see that the class needs something from her, but she is still listening for footsteps outside the door.

"Are you mad at us?" a child asks.

"No," she says. "You haven't done anything wrong."

She pauses. She wants to tell them everything is fine. She does not yet know what the plan is.

"The adults are working out what happens next," she says instead. "Right now, we're going to take a quiet minute together."

It is a reasonable sentence. She would like to know whether it is true.

A quiet room leaves questions unanswered

The immediate disruption has ended. That gives the school a chance to make decisions about what follows. It does not answer those questions by itself.

Can Ms. Ellis continue teaching? Do any of the children need additional support? Who is assessing the threat? What assistance does the student involved need? What will happen if that student returns to the room? What does Ms. Ellis need to know before then?

Without clear answers, she has to manage the uncertainty while supervising the class. If a child asks whether it could happen again, she cannot responsibly promise that it will not. If the office calls, she has to discuss the incident where students may hear. If she needs time to write down what happened, that time must come from somewhere.

This is the work hidden inside the instruction to carry on.

There is research behind the need to examine the response. A 2017 study analyzed accounts from 237 teachers within a larger survey. Those accounts described how absent administrative support affected teachers personally, complicated their dealings with others, and created problems within school procedures. This qualitative finding explains experiences in the sample; it does not tell us what percentage of all schools respond poorly. [6]

We should examine that instruction closely. Sometimes a teacher will feel ready to continue and prefer to remain with the class. Sometimes the teacher will need coverage, medical attention, or another form of assistance. A useful response makes room to establish what is needed. It should not require the teacher to reach a breaking point before help becomes available.

Ms. Ellis has kept her voice steady. That tells us something about what she has managed in front of the children. It does not establish that she has received adequate support.

What the teacher can say—and what leaders must arrange

Suppose Ms. Ellis contacts the office again.

“I need someone to supervise the class so I can speak with an administrator privately. I also need to know the plan before the student returns.”

This is a specific request. It identifies an immediate need and a decision that requires clarification. Teachers reading this may find such wording useful. A person under strain, however, should not have to produce a perfectly composed request to receive a responsible response.

“I need help” should be enough to begin a conversation about assistance.

The administrator still has work to do: arrange supervision, establish the immediate safety needs, identify the appropriate assessment process, and communicate what has been decided. Ms. Ellis cannot assign another employee to cover her class. She cannot create additional staffing. She cannot resolve the school's response while remaining solely responsible for the children in front of her.

Those limits are practical. They are also central to this book. Advice to teachers should respect the difference between what a teacher can request and what someone with authority must provide.

Taking the student's needs seriously

In the supervised room, the student who made the threat is also waiting for adults to decide what comes next.

We have not supplied this fictional child with a diagnosis, a history, or an explanation for the behavior. Those details would matter in a real response. Adults would need to establish the facts, consider the student's age and needs, and follow the relevant school procedures with qualified support.

A child's distress deserves attention. So does a threat directed at a teacher. Attending to both requires enough information and an actual plan.

An apology may become part of repairing a relationship. It cannot, on its own, tell Ms. Ellis how to get help if the behavior happens again. Nor does it establish whether the child now has the support needed to participate safely.

Imagine the student returns carrying a note that says, "I'm sorry." Ms. Ellis can acknowledge the apology and still need answers about supervision, assistance, and the response to another threat. The child's effort to repair harm should not carry the weight of decisions adults have yet to make.

There is a responsibility here to the student, too. Asking a child to promise better behavior without addressing the circumstances and support needs leaves important work unfinished.

The classmates need adults to lead

The child with the torn worksheet has not asked a question. Another student wants to describe every detail. A third wants to return to the assignment.

Their different responses should guide how adults offer support. Children should have an appropriate way to ask questions or seek a private conversation. They should not be required to describe the incident publicly, comfort their teacher, or decide what should happen to a classmate.

A teacher might say:

"What happened interrupted our learning, and some of you may have questions. Adults are taking care of the next steps. If you want to talk privately, we will help you do that."

The school then needs a way to fulfill that offer. Who is available to speak with a child? How will the teacher arrange it while supervising everyone else? What information should families receive from the appropriate school contact?

The words used in a classroom matter. Their usefulness depends on what adults are prepared to do afterward.

A second version of the same morning

Now imagine a different response to Ms. Ellis's call.

After the immediate situation is stabilized, the assistant principal arranges for another adult to supervise the class and speaks with Ms. Ellis privately.

"Tell me what you need right now. Then we'll go through what happened. I'll explain what we know and what we're still working out."

Ms. Ellis says she needs a few minutes away from the classroom. She wants to record the words she remembers. She asks whether the student will return before lunch.

The assistant principal does not have a final answer. She says so. She identifies who is reviewing the situation and gives Ms. Ellis a time for the next update. Before the teacher resumes instruction, they discuss the immediate arrangements, the contact for assistance, and what will happen if that contact is unavailable.

The assistant principal also takes responsibility for coordinating the appropriate family communication. Ms. Ellis will provide relevant facts, but she will not be expected to manage a difficult parent conversation alone between lessons.

Later, the assistant principal returns when she said she would. Some questions remain open. She explains which ones, who is addressing them, and what interim arrangements apply.

This response does not erase the threat. It gives Ms. Ellis information, time, and people she can call upon. It also gives the school a clearer view of what remains unresolved.

These are proposed practices to develop throughout the book, not a substitute for a school's emergency procedures

or an individualized response. Their purpose is to make responsibility visible.

When the help does not arrive

Schools have staffing constraints. A principal may be managing several urgent situations. A counselor may be unavailable. Another teacher may already be covering a class.

Those constraints belong in the account of what happened. If a school repeatedly cannot provide assistance when staff request it, district leaders need to know what demand exists, which responses were unavailable, and what resources or arrangements are missing. The record should identify the gap accurately rather than treating a request as completed because someone answered the telephone.

For example, “Office contacted at 10:07; no classroom coverage provided before lunch” tells us something that “Teacher supported” does not.

It also creates a question that can be acted upon: what arrangement would have allowed assistance to reach this classroom?

A teacher's willingness to finish the day should not close that question. Leaders can thank the teacher for managing a difficult situation and still examine why the response was inadequate.

A short record that helps people act

After an incident, a useful account separates three things: what happened, its immediate effects, and what assistance is needed. Use the school's approved reporting process and protect student information. The example below is fictional and demonstrates a way to organize the information; it is not a required form or legal standard.

What happened	Immediate effect	Assistance needed
At approximately 10:07, a student pushed a chair aside and said, "I'm going to hurt you." I contacted the office. A staff member escorted the student to another room.	Instruction stopped. One student asked whether I was angry at the class. I had difficulty concentrating when I attempted to resume the lesson.	Classroom coverage for a private conversation; confirmation of the immediate safety arrangements; a named contact for further assistance.
I was told someone would check back. At 10:30, I had not received an update.	I did not know whether the student would return or what arrangements would apply.	An update from the responsible administrator and a time for the next review.

Record the words remembered accurately. If the wording is uncertain, say so. Identify estimates as estimates. Someone else's account should be attributed to that person rather than presented as something the writer witnessed.

The teacher's record is one source of information. A fair review may need additional accounts and relevant records. Providing interim support need not imply that every fact has already been settled.

A reporting form also cannot supply the response on its own. Once the information has been provided, someone must review it and act within their responsibilities.

What each person can change

For the teacher, the immediate task may be as small as naming a need: "I need coverage," "I need a private conversation," or "I need the plan explained." The teacher does not have to solve every part of the situation in that request.

For a colleague, useful help may mean giving a factual witness account, checking whether promised assistance arrived, or offering a specific task that can be done without abandoning other responsibilities. "I can bring the class

materials you need” is easier to use than an open-ended offer that requires the teacher to organize everything.

For a parent, useful participation begins with finding out what happened through the appropriate school contact, listening to concerns about the child's needs, and working toward a response that addresses harm. A parent can ask whether the child's account has been heard while also taking a report of threatening behavior seriously.

For a school leader, the task is to turn available authority into action. Assign the next step. Explain the interim arrangements. Identify who will communicate with the people involved. Return to check whether the plan worked.

For a district leader, repeated failures to provide timely assistance should lead to a review of staffing, procedures, and access to qualified support. Asking individual teachers to make the same request again cannot create capacity that the system has failed to provide.

Before the next lesson

In the second version of the morning, Ms. Ellis returns to the classroom after speaking privately with the assistant principal. The worksheet is still on her desk. One child has drawn in the margin; another has finished the page.

She decides to shorten the activity. The adult who covered the class tells her which children asked to speak with someone. Ms. Ellis knows whom to contact and when she will receive the next update.

The morning is still difficult. She does not have to pretend otherwise.

What has changed is that other adults now hold specific parts of the work. She can turn toward her students knowing that the response will continue beyond her classroom door.

Before asking a teacher to begin the next lesson, a school should be able to explain what it has done to make that next lesson possible.

SOURCES

Research Notes and Sources

Sources were checked for this rebuilt edition through October 7, 2026. Numbered notes identify research and official guidance used in the text. Fictional scenarios are the book's illustrations, not research participant accounts. The proposed practices are distinguished from study findings throughout.

The manuscript does not treat convenience samples as national prevalence estimates, intentions as observed departures, associations as causes, or pooled international estimates as current U.S. rates. Where only an abstract was accessible, the text is limited accordingly. Online guidance and legal requirements can change; consult the responsible agency or a qualified adviser for an individual matter.

[1] National Center for Education Statistics (2023). *Teachers Threatened With Injury or Physically Attacked by Students*. The Condition of Education indicator uses 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey data and a preceding-twelve-month reporting period. These are public-school estimates from a pandemic-affected year, not a 2026 prevalence measure. NCES indicator.

[2] McMahon and colleagues (2024). *Violence and Aggression Against Educators and School Personnel, Retention, Stress, and Training Needs: National Survey Results*. *American Psychologist*, 79(7), 903–919. DOI: 10.1037/amp0001348. Voluntary convenience samples, retrospective self-reports, and a broader violence measure limit comparisons with national estimates. Full article.

[3] McMahon and colleagues (2024; online 2023). *Teacher-Directed Violence and Anxiety and Stress: Predicting Intentions to Transfer and Quit*. *School Psychology*, 39(5), 530–544. DOI: 10.1037/spq0000595. The analysis concerns reported experiences and intentions. It shares the earlier survey project with [2], rather than supplying an entirely independent replication. Abstract.

[4] Perry and colleagues (2026). *Necessary but Not Sufficient: School Administrator Support and Teacher Safety, Anxiety/Stress, Retention, and Victimization*. *Educational Researcher*, online July 10. DOI: 10.3102/0013189X261457851. The public abstract was

reviewed. The manuscript does not extend its associational findings into causal claims about the book's practices. Abstract.

[5] Steiner, Levine, and Doan (2026). *Teacher Well-Being, Pay, and Intentions to Leave in 2026: Selected Findings from the 2026 State of the American Teacher Survey*. RAND, RR-A4404-2. Nationally representative surveys were administered in January–February 2026. These findings concern workforce conditions rather than abuse prevalence. Report; research release.

[6] McMahon, Reaves, McConnell, Peist, Ruiz, and the APA Task Force (2017). *The Ecology of Teachers' Experiences With Violence and Lack of Administrative Support*. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 60(3–4), 502–515. DOI: 10.1002/ajcp.12202. The manuscript uses the public abstract's qualitative finding. Abstract.

[7] Qiao, Wang, Chen-Bouck, and Zaeske (2026). *Teacher-Targeted Bullying: A Meta-Analysis of Student Bullying of Teachers*. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, online January 29. DOI: 10.1177/15248380251408406. The review includes 59 studies from 26 countries, with differing measures and recall periods. Full article.

[8] U.S. Department of Education (2024). *Using Functional Behavioral Assessments to Create Supportive Learning Environments*. November. The discussion uses guidance on collaboration, behavioral plans, staff responsibility, educator support, and evaluation, particularly pages 6–10. It does not claim that the book's framework is validated by this guidance. Guidance.

[9] De Wet, Corene (2010). *Victims of Educator-Targeted Bullying: A Qualitative Study*. *South African Journal of Education*, 30(2), 189–201. Seven educators and school leaders were recruited through snowball sampling. The participant experiences are paraphrased, attributed, and contextualized; they are not the author's interviews. Full article.

[10] U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. *Retaliation and Time Limits for Filing a Charge*. Current official guidance was checked October 7, 2026. Coverage, protected activity, facts, and deadlines require case-specific consideration. Retaliation; filing time limits.