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AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION OF  
PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING

by

Devon Punchello

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Language, Literacy, and Special Education  
College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of  
Master of Arts in Learning Disabilities

at

Rowan University

May 2012

Thesis Chair: S. Jay Kuder, Ed.D.

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## **Dedication**

This manuscript is dedicated to my mother whose influence and example has inspired me to further my education.

## **Acknowledgements**

The writer would like to acknowledge all the members of her family for their continued love and support while pursuing this dream. I would not have been able to complete this without all of you. Thank you for your assistance and support, your time and patience, and most of all your encouragement and love.

## **Abstract**

Devon Punchello

An Exploratory Investigation of  
Public School Teachers' Perceptions of Bullying

2011/2012

S. Jay Kuder, Ed.D.  
Masters of Arts in Learning Disabilities

The purpose of this research was to (1) examine teachers' attitudes and perceptions regarding harassment, intimidation, and bullying, (HIB) behaviors displayed by public school students, (2) determine changes in teachers attitudes and perceptions regarding HIB as a result of specific training and, (3) identify the subsequent impact on their views and opinions of HIB.

A survey was distributed to certified teachers to collect data. Both regular and special education teachers' perceptions regarding HIB before and after the training took place was measured.

The results indicated that most teachers felt that the training was effective in creating awareness of what determines harassment, intimidation, and bullying, the serious effects of bullying, and how to appropriately respond to these behaviors. The results reflected a change in teachers' perceptions to view HIB as atypical and unacceptable behavior. The results also revealed that most teachers felt special education students were more likely than regular education students to be victims of HIB, but even more so, to engage in HIB behavior. It is the special education teachers who felt most strongly in both regards.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

New Jersey has been a leader in the establishment of a strong statutory, regulatory policy and program framework to support the prevention, remediation and reporting of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) in schools. On January 5, 2011 New Jersey Governor Chris Christie signed into law P.L.2010, Chapter 122; an act concerning HIB in school settings that amended various parts of the statutory law. In particular for school policies and procedures, the act amended N.J.S.A. 18A:37-13 et seq., which includes the requirements for the prevention and intervention of HIB on and off school grounds, at school- sponsored functions and on school buses. The goal of this law is to have schools that are safe, civil environments where all students can learn in peace and to prevent bullying before it starts. HIB in schools is clearly wrong, has many serious and negative effects and it is unlawful in New Jersey.

### **Research Problem**

“They call me names every day and make me feel like I don’t belong. It never stops.” Her face dissolved into sobs, then the words I feared most: “I can’t face another day. That kid who committed suicide . . . well, that’s what I’m ready to do.” This beautiful child, filled with promise, pushed to the brink by bullying at the tender age of 10. (Drew, 2011)

“Shawna,” with help from her school counselor, is weathering the storm. But countless other kids are lost in despair due to bullying. According to the White

House, 13 million students are bullied each year, about a third of all students. Yet it is not only bullied students who suffer. All students lose when bullying occurs.

Those who bully are more likely to end up incarcerated by age 30, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Bystanders are harmed too. "People who simply watch their peers get verbally or physically bullied experience just as much, if not more, psychological distress as the actual bullying victim," says School Psychology Quarterly. For these reasons and more, the Centers for Disease Control calls bullying "a major public health problem" and reports that 13.8 percent of students in grades 9-12 seriously considered suicide in the previous 12 months as a result of bullying (Drew, 2011).

Harassment, intimidation and bullying behaviors in schools are unlawful in New Jersey. Certain types of HIB also violate the New Jersey Law against Discrimination (LAD). (NJ Office of the Attorney General, 2011). Bullying is now a crime and it is not going away. There are about 160,000 children that miss school every day out of fear of being bullied (Hart, 2011). The same report indicates an increase in cyberbullying activities. Bullycide is a term used to describe suicide as the result of bullying. Bullycide statistics reveals suicide to be one of the leading causes of death among children under the age of 14. New bullying statistics as recent as 2010 are reporting that there is a strong connection between bullying, being bullied, and suicide (Bullying Statistics, 2010). According to a new study from the Yale School of Medicine, suicide rates are continuing to grow among adolescents, and have grown more than 50 percent in the last 30 years. The numbers continue to rise. (Young-Shin, 2008)

The pervasiveness of peer victimization, or bullying, among children and adolescents is well documented. The effects of bullying may be far-reaching and lasting for bullies and victims alike (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1994; Mishna, 2003). Children who are victims tend to be less accepted by peers than children who are not victims (Egan & Perry, 1998; Hodges & Rodkin, 2003; Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999). Based on the characteristics common to children with learning disabilities (LD) and children who are bullied, there is reason to believe that children with LD are at greater risk of peer victimization (Martlew & Hodson, 1991; Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993; Mishna, 2003; Whitney, Nabuzoka, & Smith, 1992).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1975, the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require schools to provide equal educational opportunity to all students. This responsibility includes the right to learn in a safe and supportive environment. The research on bullying among students with disabilities shows that they have a greater likelihood of being bullied than their classmates without disabilities (Pivik, McComas, & LaFlamme, 2002; Saylor & Leach, 2009; Mishna, 2003). Children who are victimized or rejected by their peers are more likely to display physical, behavioral, developmental, and learning disabilities. (Doren, Bullis, & Benz, 1996; Marini, Fairbairn, & Zuber, 2002). In this study I focus on the questions of whether or not teachers' perceptions on bullying, victims, identification and consequences are altered by a school districts implementation of HIB requirements.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What are the attitudes and perceptions of Regular Education teachers towards harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB)?
2. What are the attitudes and perceptions of Special Education teachers towards harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB)?
3. What changes in attitudes and perceptions have taken place since the initiation of harassment, intimidation and bullying policies (HIB)?
4. How does implementing policies regarding HIB impact both regular and special education teachers' awareness and responsiveness towards HIB?

There has been a great deal of research conducted on this topic as well as incidents that have brought national and international attention to the topic. However, an essential first step in addressing the issue of bullying is the education of both school personnel and students about the significance of acts of harassment, intimidation and bullying. Because the teacher is the frontline in identifying and intervening in HIB incidents, this study gathers information from the teachers' perspective. I hope to discover any changes in regular and special education teachers' perceptions of bullying and victims and I hope to investigate the impact HIB policies are having on their awareness and responsiveness to such incidents.

## **Definitions**

1. HIB – (harassment, intimidation, and bullying) – means any gesture, written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, as defined in N.J.S.A.

18A:37-14, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds as provided for in section 16 of P.L.2010, c.122 (C.18A:37-15.3), that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students and that:

- a. a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property;
- b. has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; or
- c. creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

2. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a United States law, enacted on June 23, 1972, that amended Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 2002 it was renamed the Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act, in honor of its principal author Congresswoman Mink, but is most commonly known simply as Title IX. The law states that, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to

discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance..."—United States Code Section 20.

3. IDEA - IDEA, the Individual with Disabilities Education Act, is our nation's special education law. The IDEA guides how states, school districts, and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

4. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act - Before there was IDEA, there was the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Section 504 of this Act continues to play an important role in education, especially for students with disabilities who may not qualify for special education services under IDEA.

5. P.L. 2002 c.83 - N.J.S.A. 18A:37-14 – New Jersey public school anti-bullying statute enacted in 2002.

6. P.L.2010, c.122 – an act concerning harassment, intimidation, and bullying in school settings, amending various parts of the statutory law and supplementing P.L. 2002, c. 83 and chapter 3B of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

7. Bullycide – Bullycide is a term used to describe suicide as the result of bullying.

8. Cyberbullying - is the use of the internet and related technologies to harm other people, in a deliberate, repeated, and hostile manner. As it has become more

common in society, particularly among young people, legislation and awareness campaigns have arisen to combat it.

9. LAD – the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination.

### **Summary**

Bullying is a widespread and serious problem that can happen anywhere. It is not a phase children have to go through, it is not "just messing around", and it is not something to grow out of. Bullying can cause serious and lasting harm. Bullying is an issue that teachers will have to face despite the location of the school or the grade levels they teach. Regardless of teaching in an upper-class district, a lower-class district, a special education classroom, a general education classroom, kindergarten or high school, bullying is an issue everywhere. In this study I focus on the question of enacting the HIB law and policies in the public school, the required training for all staff and resulting impact on the teachers' perception and responsiveness to HIB. I hope to discover whether there have been changes in teachers' attitudes and perceptions about harassment, intimidation and bullying as a result of these new laws and initiatives to prevent HIB.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

While bullying is an issue that many children deal with and even accept as part of a normal childhood, doctors, researchers, and psychologists see it as “systematic abuse” that leads to the deterioration of school climate and culture (Meyer-Adams, 2002). Serious psychological problems can arise in those who are victimized, and devastating violence can occur in schools that are affected (Osler, 2006).

#### **Bullying Defined**

According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, bullying is defined as “aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power or strength”. Bullying can take many forms and consist of many different behaviors. Some of the forms and behaviors may include: name calling and put downs, teasing, spreading of rumors, ignoring or leaving someone out, physical violence and attacks (pushing, pulling, hitting,) threats and intimidation, stealing of money or other property, exclusion from a group or club, may be based on ethnicity, religion, gender, etc.

Currently, there is no one universally accepted definition of bullying. As it has become more common in society, particularly among young people, legislation and awareness campaigns have arisen to combat it. “A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students (Olweus 1993). According to Olweus, to

be regarded as bullying, the negative actions must occur at least once a week for a month or more. Negative actions can include physical contact, words, making faces or dirty gestures, and intentional exclusion from a group. Ross (2003) concluded that a salient feature inherent in the definition of bullying is the existence of an imbalance of power. Despite inconsistency in the definition of bullying, she reported that most investigators agree that bullying involves an imbalance of physical or psychological power. The bully is at least perceived to be stronger than the victim. Ross defined bullying as...intentional and generally unprovoked attempts by one or more individuals to inflict physical hurt and/or psychological distress on one or more victims. There must be an imbalance of physical or psychological power. In addition, she further explained that bullying can either be direct, involving face-to-face physical or verbal confrontations, or it can be indirect, involving relational bullying such as spreading rumors or social exclusion. The student who is exposed to the negative actions has difficulty defending himself or herself" (Olweus, 1995). A new form of bullying has recently come about due to computers, the internet, and technology. This type of bullying is called cyberbullying. According to the Web site <http://www.cyberbullying.us>, cyberbullying is defined as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices."

**Evolution of P.L.2010, Chapter 122, Anti – Bullying Bill of Rights Act (N.J.S.A. 18A:34 et seq.)**

Some forms of harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) violate the New Jersey law against discrimination (LAD). HIB is unlawful in New Jersey, and certain

types violate the New Jersey LAD which is enforced by the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights. The LAD prohibits most schools from discriminating against students based on race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or disability. Any harassment, intimidation or bullying that targets a student because of any of the characteristics mentioned is a violation of civil rights and a crime.

#### Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Before there was LAD there was the Civil Rights Act of 1964: An act to enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

#### The Rehabilitation Act

Before there was IDEA, there was the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Section 504 of this Act continues to play an important role in education, especially for students with disabilities who may not qualify for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

IDEA is our nation's special education law. It guides how states, school districts, and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed by the Congress and signed into law by the President in July 1990, the ADA is the first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities. The ADA protects the civil rights of people with disabilities.

One early study that focused on harassment in the schools was conducted in 1995 in Seattle (University of Washington, 1995) According to the findings, harassed students are more likely to experience risk factors such as suicide, missing school, being threatened or injured in school, carrying weapons, etc. when compared with other students. In 1998, researchers at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development conducted a study of the prevalence of bullying in a national sample of all public and private school students—including parochial schools—in the United States in grades 6 through 12. The study results were published in 2001 and the concerns identified in the paper received a great deal of media attention. The researchers found that bullying is a serious problem for American youth and that the findings are consistent with those of the European and Australian researchers. Bullying is more common among boys than girls and occurs more frequently in middle school than high school. Among males, both physical and verbal bullying is common; among girls, verbal bullying (taunting and sexual comments) and rumors are more common. Interestingly, “verbal bullying through

derogatory statements about one's religion or race occurred infrequently for both sexes." The authors suggest that this may be because of social constraints among youth for this kind of speech—in other words, it is socially taboo among American youth to speak derogatorily of another's race or religion. This raises interesting questions of whether the federal laws against discrimination on the basis of race or religion—including prohibition of harassment—have been effective in modeling tolerance. If so, it is strong support for the positive long-term benefit of prohibiting bullying /harassing on the basis of other personal characteristics such as disability.

New Jersey legislation enacted in September 2002 required each school to adopt a HIB policy. The state amended the law in 2007 to include cyberbullying. The state also amended the law in 2008 to require each school district to post its anti-bullying policy on its website and to distribute it annually to parents or guardians of students enrolled in the district. The growing concern is also reflected in the establishing of The Commission on Bullying in Schools in January 2008. On January 13, 2008, Governor Jon S. Corzine signed onto law P.L. 2007, Chapter 303, Section 9, establishing the Commission on Bullying in Schools. The Commission consists of fourteen members including the Director of the Division on Civil Rights. A 2009 study by the United States Department of Justice and Education, "Indicators of School Crime and Safety," reported that 32% of students aged 12 through 18 were bullied in the previous year. The study reported that 25% of the responding public schools indicated that bullying was a daily or weekly problem. A 2009 study by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance," reported that the percentage of students bullied in New Jersey is 1

percentage point higher than the national median. In 2010, the chronic persistence of bullying has led to student suicides across the country, including New Jersey. As a result of these findings, the Commission rendered a report of its recommendations and its recommendations to the Governor in December 2009. Anti-bullying legislation received national attention after the suicide of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi. In the wake of the incident, New Jersey strengthened its anti-bullying legislation by passing a bill called "The Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights." Garden State Equality Chairman Steve Goldstein called New Jersey's bill the "toughest" anti-bullying law in the country. Today, 49 of the 50 states have laws against bullying (Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J., 2010).

### **Federal Anti-Bullying Laws**

While federal laws do not specifically address bullying per se, a school or district may be charged with violation of First Amendment, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and other laws aimed at protecting an individual's right to equal protection. For example, the Supreme Court has held that parents may sue a school or district for failing to take action on a harassment claim it knew about, but failed to take corrective action (in the case of *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education*).

### **Role of the State Government on School Districts**

The State Legislature found that there had been no significant improvements in bullying rates in New Jersey over the last eight years. In the absence of training

funds and funds for evidence-based programs, strengthening policy and procedure were seen as effective first steps to lowering bullying rates.

The new law is intended is to strengthen standards for preventing, reporting, investigating, and responding to incidents of bullying and reduce the risk of suicide among students. It becomes effective September 2011. The legislation outlines school district staff functions, policy and procedures, training requirements, reporting and a universal definition of HIB.

The new HIB definition "harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory handicap, disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds as provided for in section 16 of P.L.2010, CHAPTER 122, that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students and that: a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property; or has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students in such a way as to cause substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school; or creates a hostile

educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

### **Bullies and Their Victims**

If serious scholarship is to be undertaken concerning bullying, it is best to have general background knowledge of those who bully. Insights into this portion of the population are crucial because if steps are not taken to understand bullies and potential bullies, remediation and prevention will never occur. It is known that the long-term ramifications of bullying are immense: "Bullying behaviors that continue into adulthood can turn into child abuse, domestic violence, and other criminal activities" (Olweus 2011).

Students become aggressive for a number of reasons: media, friends, and family life can all contribute to destructive social behavior (Olweus 2011). Once aggressive, bullies tend to focus their attention on those perceived as weaker than themselves: "They select victims that they think are unlikely to retaliate" (Aluede et al. 2008). Students who appear to be physically abnormal and who exhibit poor social skills are most at risk of being bullied.

In general, victims tend to be anxious, careful, and insecure compared to most students. They often experience a great amount of peer alienation. Most likely, victims are less confident in themselves and less popular among schoolmates than normal. Victims also are more likely to be suicidal than their non-bullied counterparts (Aluede et al. 2008). These statistics underscore the importance of

teachers quickly identifying those who might be potential victims before harm ensues.

More revealing statistics have emerged regarding this issue: “Bullies are more likely to smoke cigarettes, to drink alcohol regularly, to be drunk, to play computer games, and to be sexually active” (Alikasifoglu et al. 2007). Sometimes, those who struggle with their social environment turn to less desirable coping strategies to deal with unresolved conflict. Statistically, those with aggressive personalities exhibit greater amounts of high risk behavior. On the other hand, victims are more likely to come from a lower socioeconomic status and have difficulty talking to the opposite gender or making new friends (Alikasifoglu et al. 2007). However, youth who were both bullies and recipients of bullying tended to fare the most poorly of all, experiencing social isolation, as well as doing poorly in school and engaging in problem behaviors, like smoking and drinking (Nansel, 2001).

Approximately 10% to 20% (Olweus, 2001) of victims are bullies as well, also described as provocative or aggressive victims. They exhibit provocative behaviors that peers and adults find irritating, such as disruptiveness, hyperactivity, and aggression. These children share characteristics with victims, such as depression, social anxiety, and feeling disliked by peers. Like bullies, they are aggressive and have problems with concentration and impulsivity. Olweus (2001) pointed out that “reading and writing problems are more common among provocative victims than among both passive victims and pure bullies”.

## **Bullying and Students with Special Needs**

All of us can remember back to elementary or secondary school and the classroom bullies who kept students and/or educators on edge and a bit wary. And many education practitioners can describe recent experiences with student bullies they teach or identify students who are bullied, including special education students.

Over the past two decades, education for students with disabilities has gone through many changes. Historically, students with disabilities were educated separately from their age peers in either special schools or different classes (Mishna, 2003). The concept of separate schools and classrooms continues to be challenged on its efficacy for students with disabilities. As the emphasis on including students with disabilities into general education classrooms has increased, educators have been primarily focused on their academic success. Much less emphasis has been placed on social integration. While it remains important to evaluate academic progress, it is also important for students with disabilities to succeed socially. According to Asher and Coie (1990), peer relationships and peer interaction are important elements needed in competent social skill development during childhood. As students with disabilities are increasingly being taught with their non-disabled peers, they are subject to a different range of childhood experiences and may be at an increased risk for bullying. Unfortunately, these experiences are not always positive, and they can have an enormous impact on children.

Bullying is not a new phenomenon. It is chronicled in both classic literature and modern film. It is a topic that has been discussed extensively in professional

literature for non-disabled students. However, until recently, bullying was regarded as merely a typical childhood experience or rite of passage that all students must survive. Unfortunately, this long-held view suggested that children must learn to deal with bullies by themselves (Ross, 2003). Twenty-five percent of teachers see nothing wrong with bullying or put-downs and consequently intervene in only 4 percent of bullying incidents (Fienberg, 2003). Even though this view contradicted the widely held understanding among educators that students must feel safe in order to learn (Olweus & Limber, 1999), little initiative was taken to address bullying, or it was managed ineffectively (Ross, 2003). Bullying was either minimally regarded or overlooked as a serious problem (Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999).

For the past ten years, research in the area of bullying conducted in the United States has trailed behind the research conducted in other countries. In response to a growing interest in bullying due to recent acts of school violence, one large-scale study on bullying has been conducted in the United States (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). This study found that 29.9 % of students in grades six through ten were involved in moderate or frequent bullying. Increasingly, it is being recognized as a serious threat to the health and development of our nation's children (Nansel, et al., 2001). The immediate effects of bullying are extremely debilitating to victims (Ross, 2003). (Hazler, Miller, Carney & Green, 2001), found that the academic performance of victims decreases significantly. In addition, they determined that the low morale and acute despair experienced by victims leads to truancy. Other effects include chronic illnesses running away, and even suicide. Additional studies

concluded that victims of bullying endure anxiety, depression, poor-esteem, impaired concentration, and avoidant behavior (Olweus, 1993).

Most experts agree that children with disabilities are harassed by peers at higher rates than their peers without disabilities (Pivik, McComas & Laflamme, 2002; Saylor & Leach, 2009; Whitney, Smith & Thompson, 1999). Morrison and Furlong (1994) examined violence at school with 554 high school students, of whom 30 were students with special needs. They found that students in special day classes were victimized more often than those in more inclusive settings (Card, Stucky & Sawalani, 2002; Furlong & Morrison, 2000). This outcome may be because isolation from the general education students have limited opportunities to learn social skills (Mishna, 2003) and develop a protective group of peers (Furlong & Morrison 2000; Whitney et al., 1994). Whitney and colleagues (1994) found with 93 students with disabilities (matched with peers in their inclusion classroom) that 55% of students with mild learning disabilities and 78% of students with moderate learning disabilities experienced bullying, compared to only 25% of their matched peers.

In spite of the pervasiveness of bullying, little research exists that examines the relationship between bullying and students with disabilities (Mishna, 2003). Within this limited research, some studies have shown that these students have an increased risk for being victimized (Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993; Yude, Goodman & McConachie, 1998). Other studies indicate that students with learning problems are highly represented in the victim population (Martlew & Hodson, 1991; Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993). For example, students with learning disabilities, emotional disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and physical disabilities often demonstrate

a lack of social awareness which may make them more vulnerable to victimization (Mishna, 2003). Additionally, research has shown that students with special needs are more susceptible to bullying and are more likely to be sociometrically rejected (Martlew & Hodson; Nabuzoka & Smith; Whitney, Smith & Thompson, 1994). Hodges and Rodkin (2003) stated that peer rejection is a social risk factor that contributes to victimization. If we are to successfully educate students with disabilities, it is critical to understand bullying and its relationship to students with disabilities.

### **Intervention**

In bullying, a power dynamic exists such that one person feels less powerful than others. Any anti-bullying program should include training in how to regain power—through direct instruction, video instruction, and integrative activities. The whole – school approach to any anti-bullying program should include training of awareness building, efficacy building and skill building. Teaching everyone about the potential effects of HIB lays the ground work for efficacy. Efficacy here refers to the ability of staff to recognize and act to stop HIB. Training program components should include strategies so teachers feel confident to take action against HIB. Skill building includes providing appropriate, up-to date and timely preparation to teachers to recognize and handle potential HIB incidents. This is done through a direct training approach that includes; responses that have been found to reduce HIB, support that reports are taken seriously and do not make the situation worse, and follow - up. Much of the content of an anti-bullying program can be delivered to students with disabilities using the same modifications already used to deliver

academic content. Pro-social skills for students should be emphasized. Training should emphasize the importance of respecting others, accepting differences, and building empathy. Training should include components in tolerance, empathy, and respect. Everyone in the school shares responsibility for building a safe environment. Bystanders should also be empowered to report bullying and harassment they observe and provide assistance to victims, who often feel helpless. Also, the program should encourage children not to watch or join in these activities when they occur. It's important to break down the culture of silence that surrounds bullying. Being bullied over time often depends on victims and bystanders staying quiet about it. Good training programs seek to break down this culture of silence by teaching students that they should get help for themselves and others, how to get help, and what will happen when they report (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011).

### **Summary**

This review of the research highlights HIB, its development and links to legislation that focuses on students specifically with special needs. It also highlights the increased risk of bullying/peer victimization of students with LD. Teachers in classrooms are at the closest position to intervene and prevent HIB incidents. The goal of this study is to determine the impact implementation of HIB policies has on teachers' perceptions, awareness and responsiveness to HIB.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to determine what impact the initiation of the mandatory HIB policies in New Jersey public schools has had on teachers' perceptions of HIB, harassment, intimidation and bullying behavior. As a result of New Jersey P.L. 2010, Chapter 122, the Burlington City School District implemented an updated district policy 5512.01 Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB). This policy contains a number of current laws that were in place previously and has been supplemented to include those now required by P.L. 2010, Chapter 122. Under the heading Bullying Prevention Programs and Training, specifically for teachers the new law states: Each public school must complete at least two hours of instruction on HIB prevention in each professional development period (100 hours). Beginning in September 2011, the Burlington City School District provided this instruction through a four part video series. Because the teacher is at the forefront of addressing any such issues in the public school environment, this study focuses on any changes in teachers' perceptions of bullying and victims and on their awareness and responsiveness to such incidents as a result of participating in the HIB training and the initiation of HIB policies.

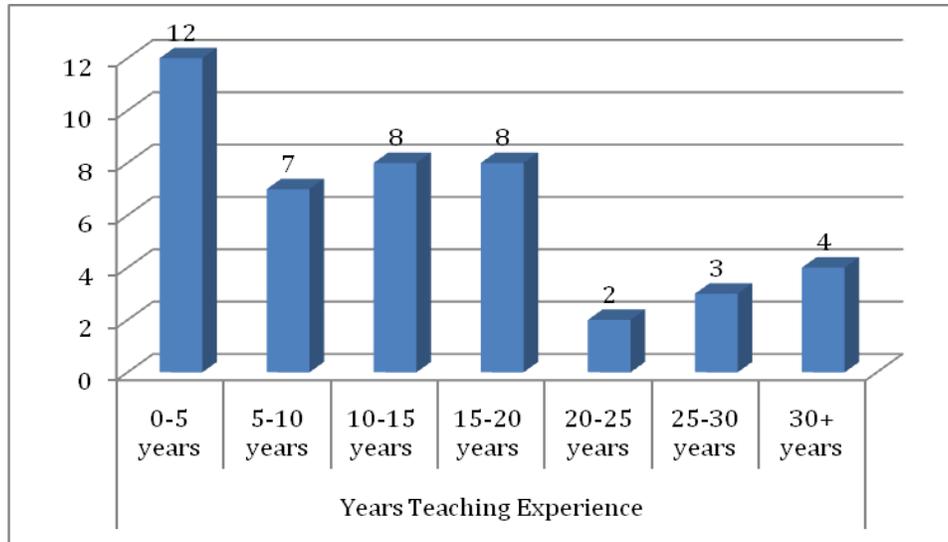
This chapter includes the details of the research design and methodology for this study. The school district, school community and the participants of the study are discussed. The second part of the chapter looks at the qualitative research and measures, sources of the data, and the ways the data are analyzed are discussed.

## **School District and Community**

Burlington City is located in Burlington County, New Jersey. The school district is comprised of five schools that serve students in grades pre – k to 12. The household median income for the city was 43,411 and for a family it was 47,969. About 5.4% of families and 8.0% of the population were below the poverty line, including 11.2% of those under 18 ([www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com)).

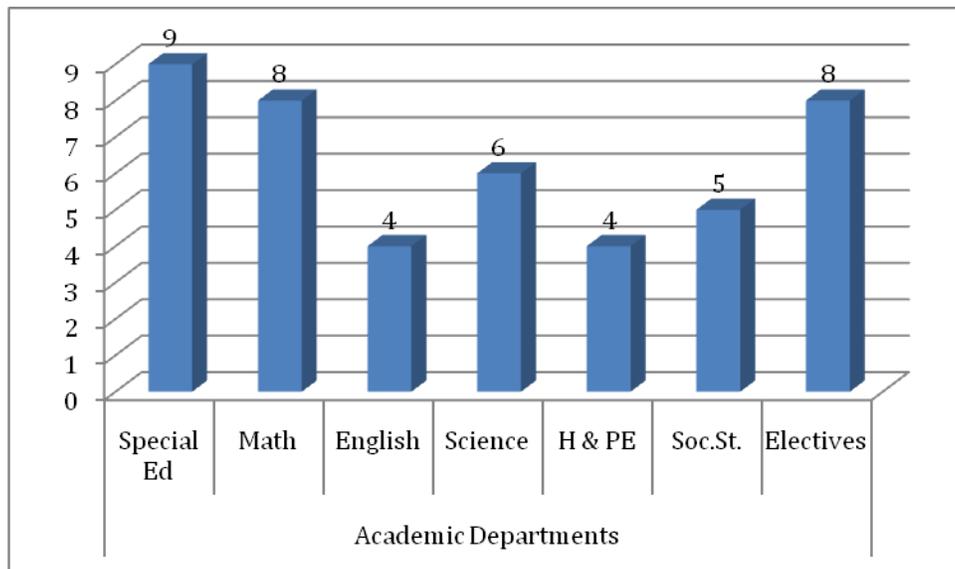
## **Participants**

A total of 44 regular and special education teachers participated in the study. All teachers were selected because of their participation in the mandatory viewing of the four- part series of HIB training videos. The program was provided through Strauss Esmay Associates, LLP-developers of policy and regulation manuals, and provides guidance to school staff in identifying harassment, intimidation, and bullying acts with strategies for reducing these acts. Participants in this study are all Full Time Equivalent (FTE) certified and highly qualified public school teachers who are currently teaching grades seven to twelve, regular education or special education classes, including inclusion and resource programs. Seventy - three surveys were distributed with 44 teachers responding, a 60.3 % return.



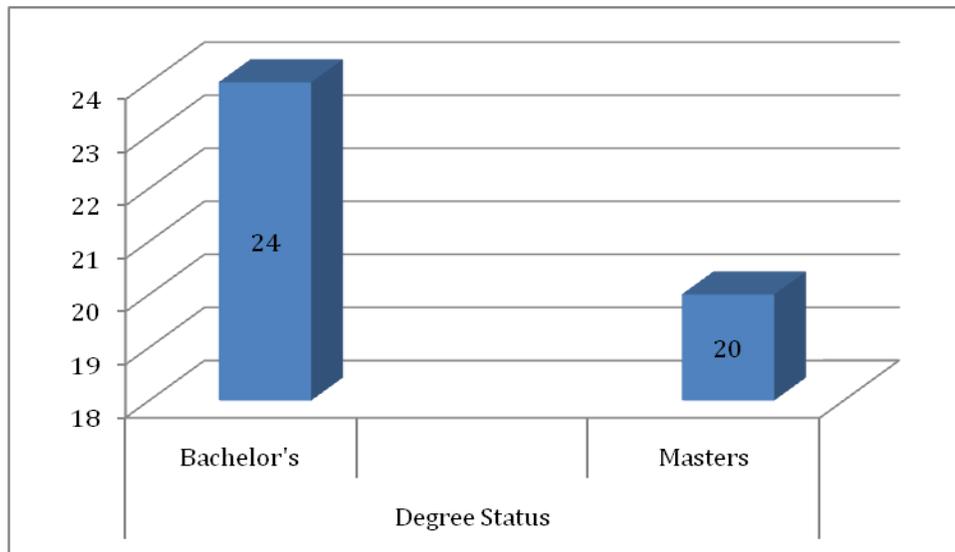
**Figure 1: Number of Years of Teaching Experience of Participants**

Distribution of the years of teaching experience of the respondents shows that 12 of 44 respondents have been teaching 0 to 5 years. 23 teachers have been teaching for 5 to 20 years. And 9 teachers have been teaching for 20 or more years.



**Figure 2: Academic Departments of Participants**

Distribution of the academic subjects taught of the respondents shows that 9 of the respondents are currently teaching special education students. 27 are teaching academic and required courses. Eight teachers are teaching a course considered an elective for example, Art, Computers, Home Ec. and World Language.



**Figure 3: Education Levels of Participants**

Distribution of the level of education attained by respondents show 24 holding a Bachelor’s degree and 20 holding a Masters degree.

### **Procedure**

A survey was used in this study. The survey was created by the researcher and consisted of 15 questions (see Appendix 1). The most efficient way to distribute the surveys was to place one in the mailbox of each teacher located in the main office of the school. The questions explored the background and experience of the teachers, their opinions of the effectiveness of the HIB videos, their perceptions of special education students’ involvement in HIB behavior and their perceptions of HIB behavior before and after the HIB training videos. The research gathered in this

study is both quantitative and qualitative. The majority of this study involves quantitative research.

Quantitative data was derived from the teacher surveys given at the end of a four part series of HIB videos provided and required by the State of New Jersey Department of Education. After the surveys were collected I made a frequency chart to compare the data collected. At the conclusion of the study all the data was compiled to determine the effect the HIB videos have had on teachers' perceptions of HIB behavior, how to recognize and respond to HIB behavior and their perceptions in regards to students in special education and HIB involvement.

The survey was given at the conclusion of a 4 - part series of HIB training videos. The series titled, "Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying, 2011 - 2012" met the requirements stated in P.L. 2010, Chapter 122 in topic, HIB prevention and time, at least two hours. The series of videos began in September 2011 and were shown in approximately one month intervals. Each video presentation was 30 minutes long and was shown during regular scheduled faculty meetings. Those teachers who missed a part of the series were required to view the missed portion before viewing the next part of the series. All participants saw all 4 parts in succession.

The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participating teachers were encouraged to complete each question and include descriptions, where applicable, of their reasoning behind their opinions. When the surveys were completed the participating teachers turned their surveys in by placing them in a designated area and they were then picked up directly by the researcher.

Each response was tallied and descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. A table of data was established to identify a percentage of responses for each question. Various charts were created to illustrate the data from the survey as well as responses. Once all the information was evaluated and analyzed, a summary of the survey was written. The summary focuses on teachers' perceptions of HIB behavior and changes in these perceptions as a result of the videos, overall effectiveness of the videos, and involvement of special education students in HIB behavior. Finally, the summary of the data will be compared to further training scheduled to take place during the school year 2012-2013.

Permission for this study was obtained from the school principal and district superintendent. All surveys were anonymous. All data will be kept in my possession for three years after the completion of my study. At that time, all data will be shredded and disposed.

## **Chapter 4**

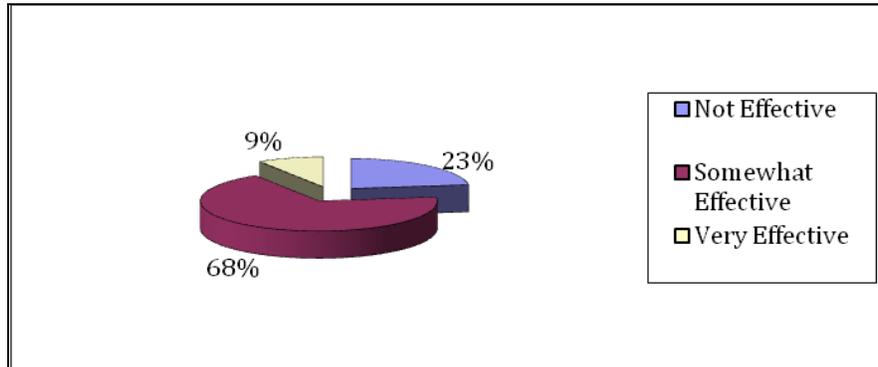
### **Results**

This chapter provides summaries of teachers' perceptions concerning HIB (harassment, intimidation, and bullying) behavior displayed by students in a New Jersey public school. Their perceptions of the type and likelihood of the involvement of special education students in HIB behavior was explored. Teachers' opinions in regards to their participation in HIB training and their ability to recognize and respond to HIB behavior were also explored. A survey was used to gather descriptive data. Respondents were asked to rate their opinions and perceptions using Yes – No responses or using a graduated numerical scale, (Likert-type Scale). The response of each question was analyzed using percentages to record the frequency. The results of the survey were analyzed using Microsoft Computer Program Excel. The results for teachers' responses to the survey are shown in Table 1.

Survey Items	Percentage of responses Per question		
How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the training?	Not Effective 23%	Somewhat Effective 68%	Very Effective 9%
How would you rate your opinion of HIB behavior prior to any training?	Typical Behavior 8%	Somewhat Typical Behavior 57%	Atypical Behavior 35%
Special Education Teacher Results	0%	67%	33%
Regular Education Results	6%	57%	37%
To what degree have your opinions about HIB behavior changed as a result of training?	Not changed 27%	Somewhat Changed 52%	Altogether Changed 18%
Special Education Teacher Results	33%	56%	11%
Regular Education Teacher Results	26%	60%	14%
Do you feel that a special education student is more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB behavior?	No 45%	Yes 21%	Not Sure 34%
Special Education Teacher Results	45%	22%	33%
Regular Education Teacher Results	57%	14%	29%
How much more likely is a special education student to become a victim of HIB behavior than a regular education student?	No More Likely 43%	Somewhat More Likely 53%	Very Much More Likely 4%
Special Education Teacher Results	22%	78%	0%
Regular Education Teacher Results	51%	43%	6%
Do you feel that a special education student is more likely than a regular education student to engage in HIB behavior?	No 27%	Yes 39%	Not Sure 34%
Special Education Teacher Results	22%	56%	22%
Regular Education Teacher Results	31%	34%	34%
How much more likely is a special education student to engage in HIB behavior than a regular education student?	No More Likely 30%	Somewhat More Likely 59%	Very Much More Likely 11%
Special Education Teacher Results	11%	78%	11%
Regular Education teacher Results	29%	63%	9%
As a result of the HIB training, do you feel you have a clear understanding of what determines HIB behavior?	Not Clear 11%	Somewhat Clear 45%	Very Clear 44%
As a result of the HIB training, Do you feel you have a clear understanding of how to respond to HIB behavior?	Not Clear 14%	Somewhat Clear 39%	Very Clear 49%

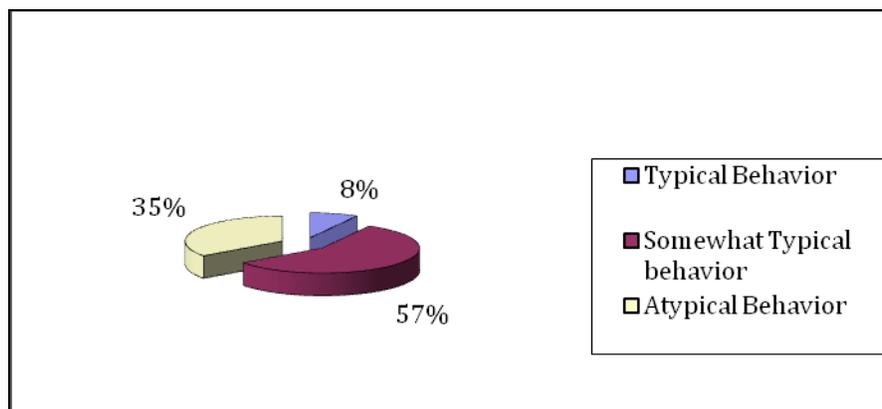
**Table 1: Percentage of Teacher Responses to Survey Questions**

## Summary of Results



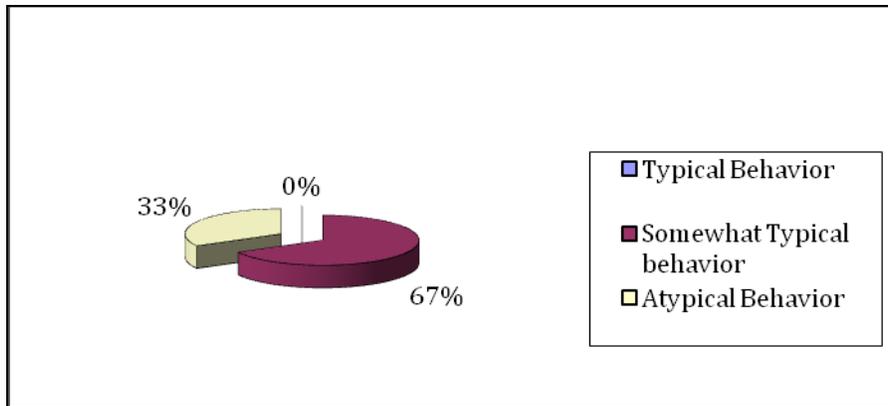
**Figure 4: All teachers' opinions of the overall effectiveness of HIB training**

As Figure 4 shows, 68% and 9% of all respondents felt the HIB training was either very effective or somewhat effective. They stated watching scenarios and interviews of bullied students more clearly identified HIB behavior and its seriousness. 23% of the respondents felt the training was not effective due in part to the narrative portions of the videos.



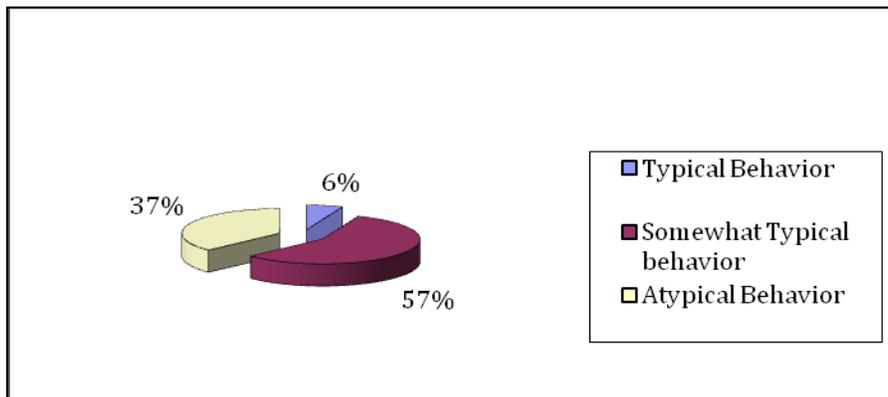
**Figure 5: All teachers' perceptions of HIB behavior prior to training**

As Figure 5 shows, 8% of all respondents view harassment, intimidation and bullying as typical adolescent behaviors. 57% of all respondents view them as somewhat typical and 35% view them as distinctly atypical behaviors.



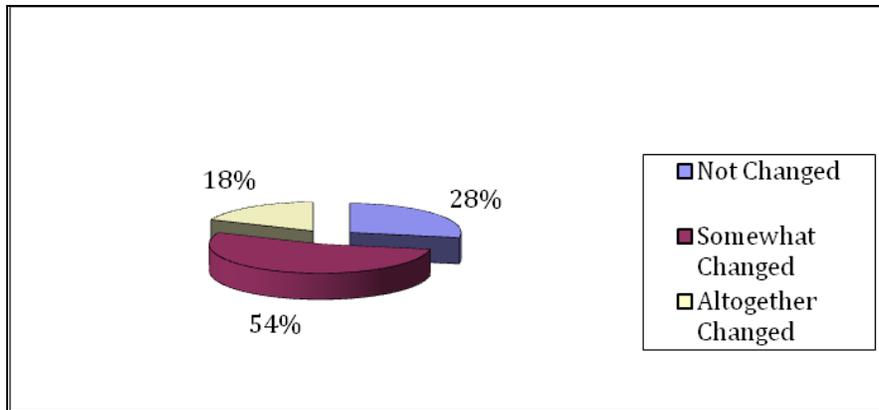
**Figure 5a: SE teachers' perceptions of HIB behavior prior to training**

As Figure 5a shows, no Special Education teacher respondent viewed HIB as typical behavior. 67% of the Special Education teacher respondents view HIB as somewhat typical and 33% view HIB as atypical behavior.



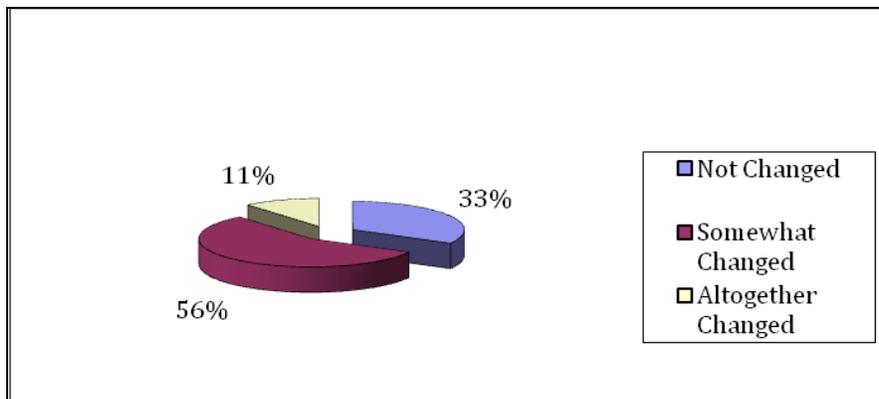
**Figure 5b: RE teachers' perceptions of HIB behavior prior to training**

Figure 5b indicates that 6% of the Regular Education teacher respondents view HIB as typical behavior. 57% of Regular Education teachers view HIB as somewhat typical and 37% view HIB as atypical behavior.



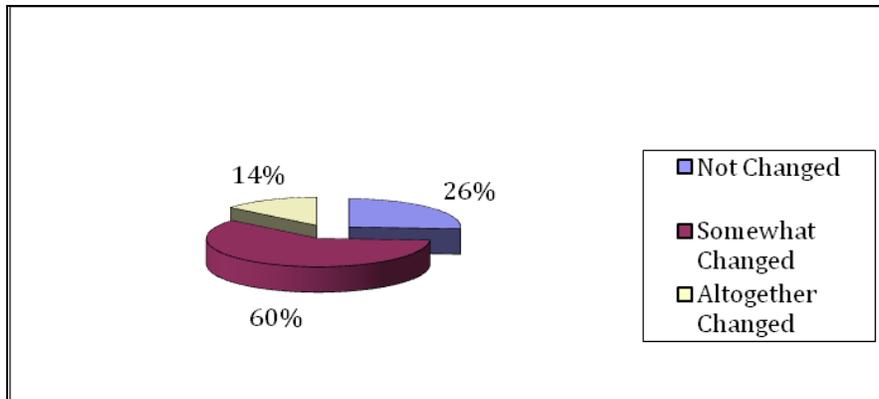
**Figure 6: Change in all teachers' opinions of HIB behavior as a result of training**

As Figure 6 shows, 28% of all respondents stated they experienced no change in their perceptions of HIB behavior displayed by students. A total of 72% of all respondents stated a change in their perceptions towards HIB behavior. They stated a better awareness of both recognizing HIB behavior and the significant impact it may have on students.



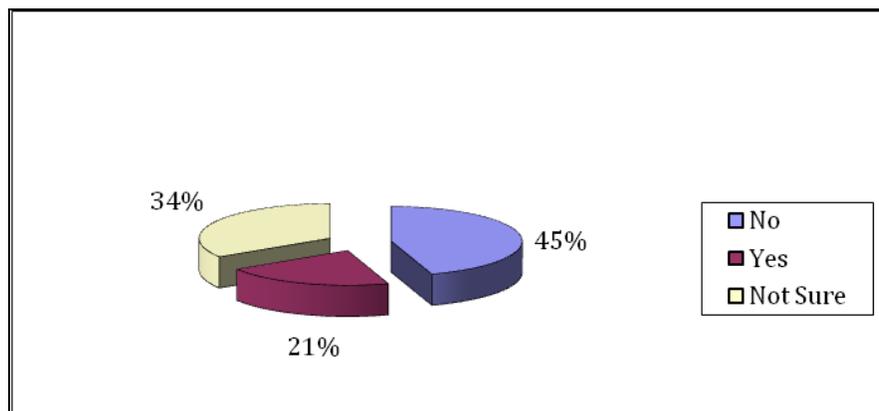
**Figure 6a: Change in SE teachers' opinions of HIB behavior as a result of HIB training**

Figure 6a indicates that 56% of the Special Education teacher respondents view their perceptions of HIB behavior to have somewhat changed and 11% view their perceptions to have altogether changed. 33% of the Special Education teacher respondents view their perception of HIB behavior to have not changed.



**Figure 6b: Change in RE teachers' opinions of HIB behavior as a result of HIB training**

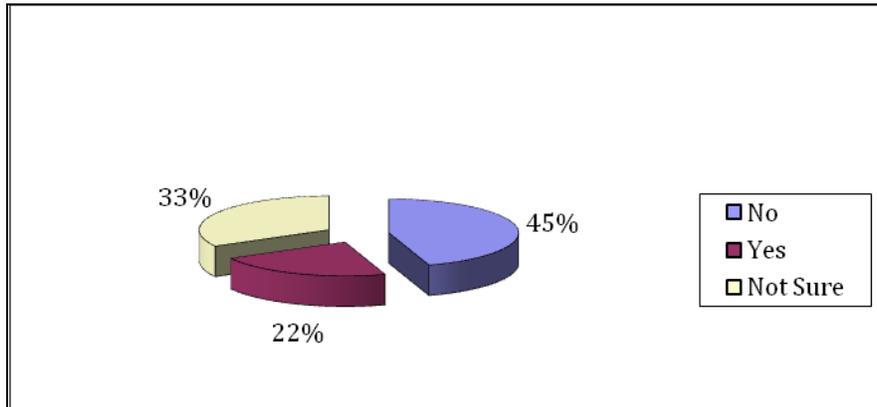
As Figure 6b shows, 26% of the Regular Education teacher respondents stated they experienced no change in their perceptions of HIB behavior. 60% of the Regular Education teacher respondents stated their perceptions towards HIB behavior had somewhat changed and 14% indicated their perceptions had altogether changed as a result of HIB training.



**Figure 7: All teachers' opinions of whether a special education student is more likely to be a victim of HIB**

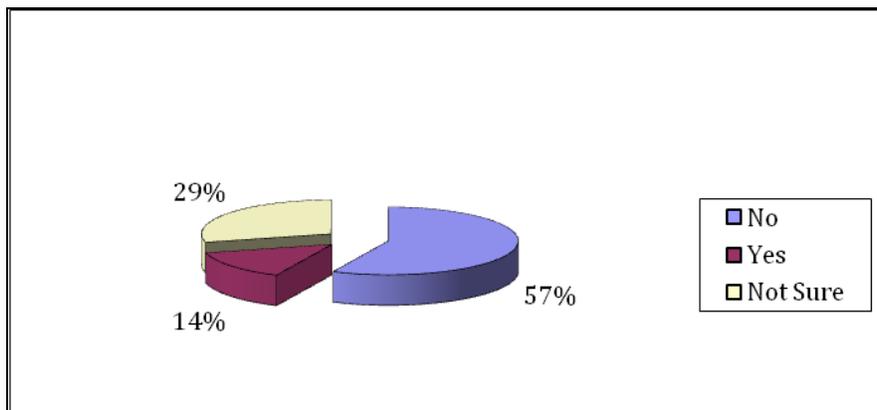
Figure 7 shows that 45% of all respondents did not feel that a special education student was any more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of harassment intimidation and bullying. 21% of all respondents stated that

they did feel that a special education student was more likely and 34% stated that they were not sure if a special education student was more likely than a regular education student be a victim of HIB.



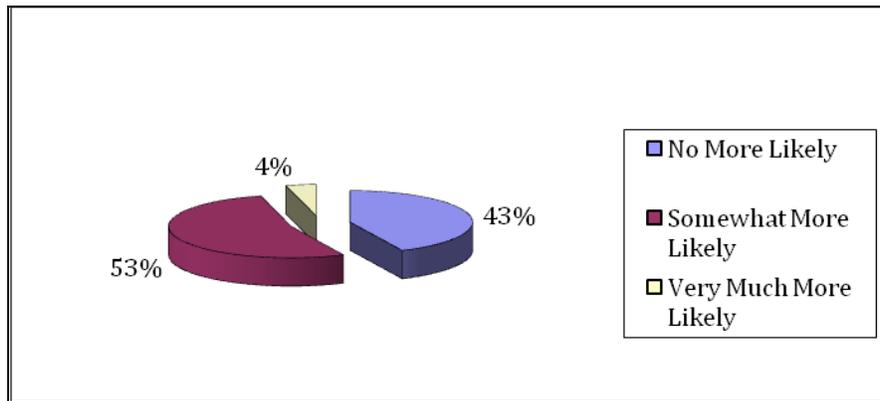
**Figure 7a: SE teachers' opinions of whether a special education student is more likely to be a victim of HIB**

Figure 7a indicates that 45% of Special Education teacher respondents did not feel that a special education student was any more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB. 22% of Special Education teacher respondents felt that they were and 33% stated they were not sure.



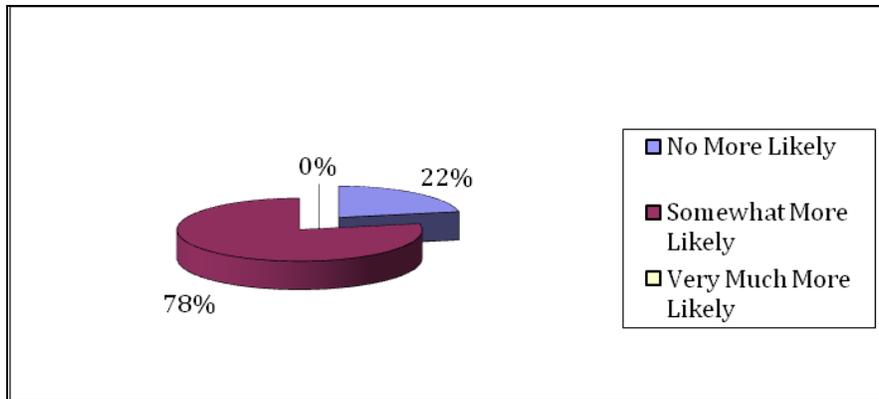
**Figure 7b: RE teachers' opinions of whether a special education student is more likely to be a victim of HIB**

Figure 7b indicates that of the Regular Education teacher respondents, 57% do not feel that a special education student is any more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB than a regular education student. 14% of the Regular Education teacher respondents indicated they did feel as though a special education student was more likely and 29% stated they were not sure.



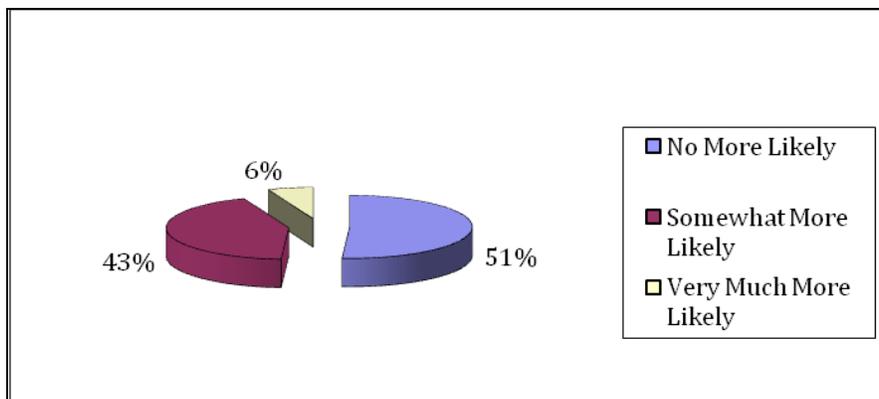
***Figure 8: All teachers' expectation of how much more likely a special education student is a victim of HIB***

In Figure 8, when asked, "How much more likely is a special education student of becoming a victim of harassment, intimidation and bullying?" 43% of all respondents indicated a special education student was no more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB. 53% of all respondents stated they felt that a special education student was somewhat more likely and 4% stated that a special education student was very much more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB behavior.



**Figure 8a: SE teachers' response to expectation of how much more likely a special education student is a victim of HIB**

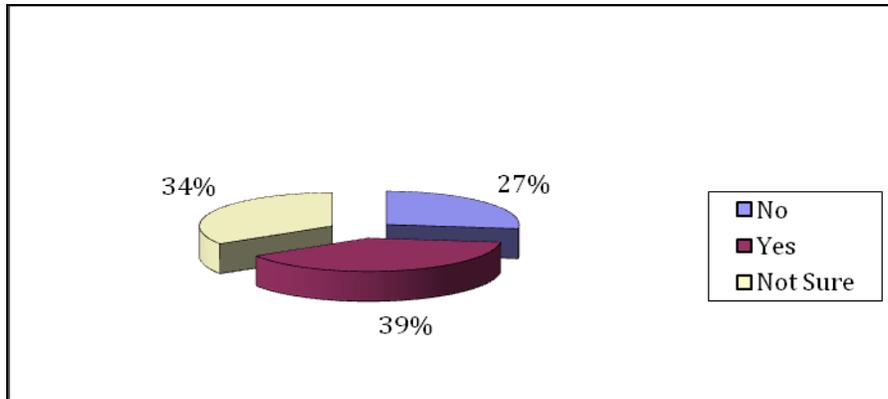
Figure 8a indicates that of the Special Education teacher respondents, 22% felt a special education student was no more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB. 78% indicate that they felt it was somewhat more likely to occur and 0% felt it was very much more likely to occur.



**Figure 8b: RE teachers' response to expectation of how much more likely a special education student is a victim of HIB**

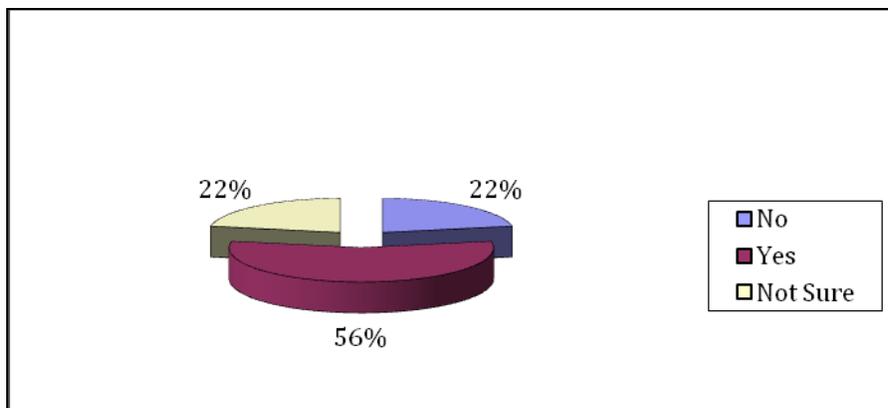
Figure 8b indicates that of the Regular Education teacher respondents, 51% felt it was no more likely for a special education student than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB behavior. 43% of Regular Education teacher

respondents felt it was somewhat more likely and 6% felt it was very much more likely to occur.



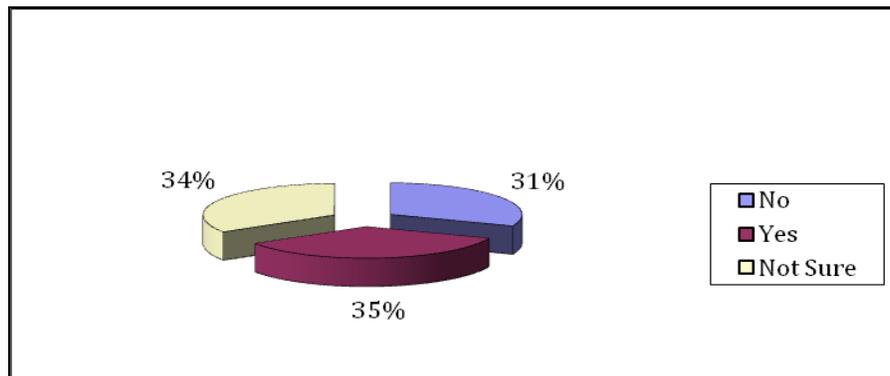
**Figure 9: All teachers' opinions of whether a special education student is more likely to engage in HIB**

Figure 9 shows that 27% of all respondents did not feel that a special education student was any more likely than a regular education student to engage in harassment intimidation and bullying. 39% of all respondents stated that they did feel that a special education student was more likely and 34% stated that they were not sure if a special education student was more likely than a regular education student to engage in HIB.



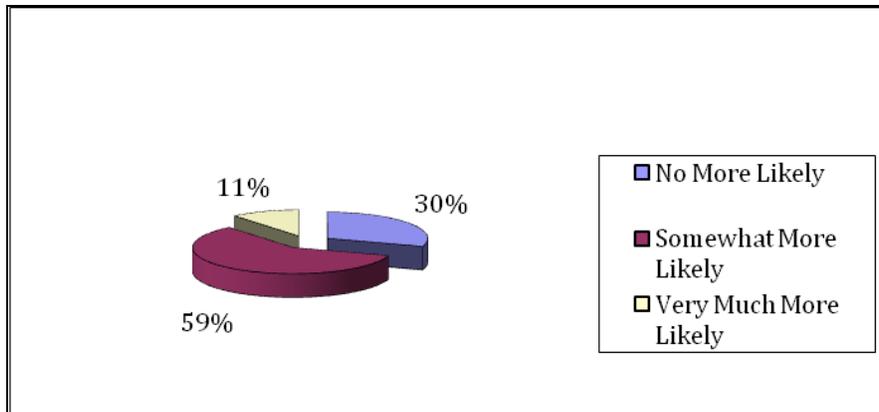
**Figure 9a: SE teachers' opinions of whether a special education student is more likely to engage in HIB**

Figure 9a indicates that 2% of Special Education teacher respondents did not feel that a special education student was any more likely than a regular education student to engage in HIB. 56% of Special Education teacher respondents felt that they were and 33% stated they were not sure.



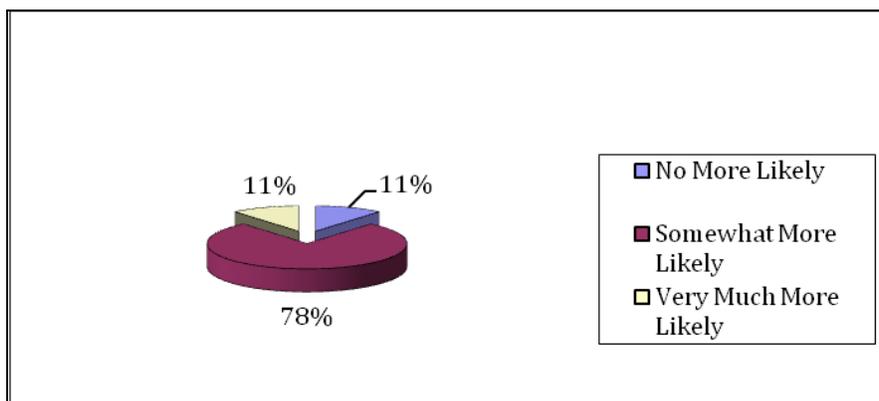
**Figure 9b: RE teachers' opinions of whether a special education student is more likely to engage in HIB**

Figure 9b indicates that of the Regular Education teacher respondents, 31% did not feel that a special education student is any more likely than a regular education student to engage in HIB than a regular education student. 35% of the Regular Education teacher respondents indicated they did feel as though a special education student was more likely and 34% stated they were not sure.



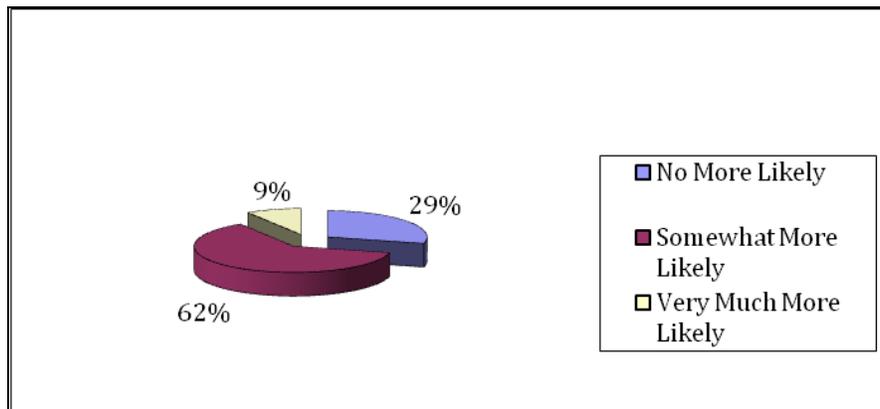
**Figure 10: All teachers' expectation of how much more likely a special education student would engage in HIB**

In Figure 10, when asked, “How much more likely is a special education student of engaging in harassment, intimidation and bullying?” 30% of all respondents indicated a special education student was no more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB. 59% of all respondents stated they felt that a special education student was somewhat more likely and 11% stated that a special education student was very much more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB behavior.



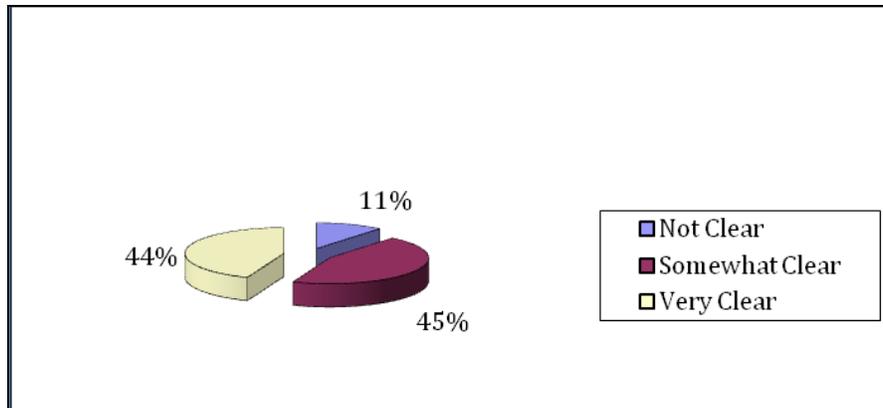
**Figure 10a: SE teachers' expectation of how much more likely a special education student would engage in HIB**

Figure 10a indicates that of the Special Education teacher respondents, 11% felt a special education student was no more likely than a regular education student to engage in HIB. 78% indicate that they felt it was somewhat more likely to occur and 11% felt it was very much more likely to occur.



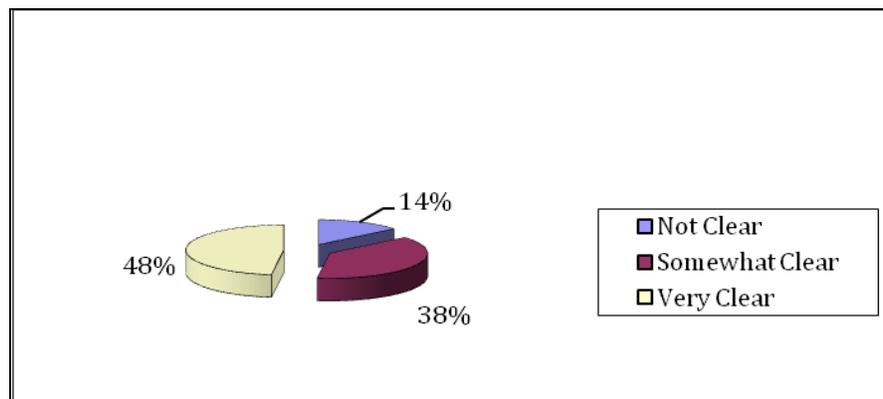
**Figure 10b: RE teachers' expectation of how much more likely a special education student would engage in HIB**

Figure 10b indicates that of the Regular Education teacher respondents, 29% felt it was no more likely for a special education student than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB behavior. 62% of Regular Education teacher respondents felt it was somewhat more likely and 9% felt it was very much more likely to occur.



**Figure 11: All teachers' ability to determine HIB behavior as a result of training**

Figure 11 indicates that 44% of all respondents stated they felt they now had a clear understanding of what determines HIB behavior. 45% of all respondents stated their understanding was somewhat clear and 11% of all respondents stated they were still not clear as to what determines HIB.



**Figure 12: All teachers' ability to respond to HIB behavior as a result of HIB training**

Figure 12 shows 48% of all respondents stated they felt they had a very clear understanding and 38% of all respondents stated they had a somewhat clear understanding of how to respond to HIB behavior. 14% of all respondents stated they were still not clear as to how to respond to HIB behavior.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to determine what impact the initiation of the mandatory harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) policies in New Jersey public schools has had on teachers' perceptions of HIB, harassment, intimidation and bullying behavior. As a result of New Jersey P.L. 2010, Chapter 122, the Burlington City School District implemented an updated district policy 5512.01 Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB). This policy contains a number of current laws that were in place previously and has been supplemented to include those now required by P.L. 2010, Chapter 122, under the heading Bullying Prevention Programs and Training. Because the teacher is at the forefront of addressing any such issues in the public school environment, this study focuses on any changes in teachers' perceptions of bullying and victims and on their awareness and responsiveness to such incidents as a result of participating in the HIB training and the initiation of HIB policies.

### **Research Questions Review**

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What are the attitudes and perceptions of regular education teachers towards HIB?
2. What are the attitudes and perceptions of special education teachers towards HIB?

3. What changes in attitudes and perceptions have taken place since the initiation of HIB policies?
4. How does implementing policies regarding HIB impact both regular and special education teachers' awareness and responsiveness towards HIB?

### **Discussion of the Study**

Bullying is a widespread and serious problem that can happen anywhere. Harassed students are more likely to experience risk factors such as suicide, missing school, being threatened or injured in school, and carry weapons. As a result, New Jersey has initiated HIB intervention and prevention with various components within the New Jersey legislation P.L. 2010, Chapter 22. Training of all staff in the recognition and response of HIB behavior displayed by students took place in the form of a 4 part video series. All the teachers responding to the HIB survey participated by viewing all 4 videos in succession in their entirety.

Seventy-three surveys were distributed and 44 teachers responded. Of the respondents 68% felt the video training was somewhat effective and 9% felt they were very effective. 77% in total felt a positive result from viewing the training videos. 9% of the respondents felt they training videos were ineffective. While the scenarios and interviews were helpful in distinguishing a behavior as HIB or not, who to contact and the overall process in reporting HIB incidents, the narrative portions they felt were difficult to follow and remember. Some teachers felt that because this is now legislation they are personally at risk.

There are societal misconceptions in regards to HIB behavior and there are references to such behavior taking place for many years. For some, HIB is viewed as

“a rite of passage”; it is considered “typical adolescent behavior”. For others it is viewed as “atypical behavior” and detrimental to student learning and development Ross, 2003. Fienberg’s (2003) article provides statistics that describes 25% of teachers reported they do not think it necessary to intervene in bullying. When participants were asked about their original opinions in regards to HIB behavior prior to exposure to the training videos, 8% of the respondents felt it was typical adolescent behavior, 57% felt it was somewhat typical while 35% felt it was distinctly atypical behavior. None of the special education teachers who responded stated they felt HIB was in any way typical behavior. When asked how their views have changed as a result of viewing the training videos 28% of all the teachers responded with no change, 33% of those were special education teachers and 26% were regular education teachers. These numbers nearly match those that felt HIB to be atypical behavior making it appear that the teachers who already felt HIB behavior to be atypical continue to feel that way. Those teachers who originally felt it was typical or somewhat typical have overwhelmingly changed their views to feel more inclined to view HIB as inappropriate and unacceptable behavior. Their comments include a better awareness and sensitivity to recognize HIB behavior and warning signs, a better awareness of the serious implications to the student being bullied, and that HIB behavior is unacceptable and failure to respond can compromise everyone involved. Their increased awareness of recognizing such behavior has made them in turn realize it is more common than they originally thought. Many teachers felt their opinions had not changed, that they have always

felt it was inappropriate behavior, but they now feel better prepared in responding to such incidents.

When respondents were asked in question 11, if they felt a special education student was more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB, 45% of all respondents stated “No”, 21% stated “Yes” and 34% stated not sure. When asked in question 12, how much more likely this would occur 43% of all the respondents stated no more likely. Nearly half of the respondents felt that special education students are in no way more likely to be a victim than a regular education student to HIB incidents. 21% of the respondents felt that special education students were more likely to be a victim and 34% stated not sure. Of the respondents answering yes or not sure, 53% stated they felt a special education student was somewhat more likely to be a victim than a regular education student and just 4% answered very much more likely. Results from the comparison of studies (Carter, 2006) indicated students with disabilities experienced bullying more than their general education peers. And comparing those studies reporting statistical findings, results indicated that the frequency with which students with disabilities were being bullied was statistically significant compared to students without disabilities. Results of Whitney’s (1994) survey indicate that 55% of students with mild disabilities, 78% of students with moderate disabilities experience bullying compared with 25% of non – disabled peers. When categorized as special education and regular education teachers, 78% of the special education teachers stated that a special education student was somewhat more likely than a regular education student to be a victim of HIB. However, no special education

teacher respondent felt it was very much more likely to happen. Only 4% of the regular education teachers felt it was very much more likely for a special education student to be a victim of HIB than a regular education student. This is not significant when compared to 45 % who felt it was no more likely and the 53% who felt it was somewhat more likely. While just over half of the respondents stated they felt a special education student was somewhat more likely to be a victim of HIB and a potential cause for concern, it is by far the special education teachers who feel this way. When compared to the results of Whitney's survey, students with disabilities are underrepresented by teacher opinion.

When respondents were asked in question 13, if a special education student was more likely to engage in HIB behavior, 27% of the respondents answered no, 39% of the respondents answered yes and 34% answered not sure. Twice as many respondents felt a special education student was more likely to engage in HIB behavior than be a victim of HIB behavior. When asked in question 14, how much more likely they felt this to occur, 30% answered no more likely, 59% answered somewhat more likely and 11% answered very much more likely. According to Olweus 2001, 10% to 20% of victims are bullies as well and Ross (2003) concluded that a salient feature inherent in the definition of bullying is the existence of an imbalance of power, whether it is physical or psychological. These two components combined with the idea that those who struggle with their social environment; i.e. students with special needs, turn to less desirable coping strategies to deal with unresolved conflict may at the core of what the teachers observe, experience and are expressing through their answers to the survey. When categorized as special

education teachers and regular education teachers 78% of special education teachers felt a special education student was somewhat more likely to engage in HIB behavior, compared to 63% of regular education teachers who feel this way. 11% of special education teachers felt it was very much more likely for a special education student to engage in HIB behavior compared to 9% of regular education teachers. It is significant that more teachers felt it was somewhat more likely for a special education student to engage in HIB than be a victim of HIB and even more significant that twice as many teachers felt it is very much more likely for a special education student to engage in HIB than to be a victim of HIB. Again, more special education teachers feel that it is more likely for a special education student to engage in HIB behavior than regular education teachers. 11% of the special education teachers feel that a special education student is very much more likely to engage in HIB behavior compared to 0% who felt it would be very much more likely for a special education student to be a victim.

As a result of the HIB training 45% of the respondents answered they felt they had a somewhat clear understanding and 44% answered they had a very clear understanding of what determines HIB behavior. 11% of the respondents felt they were still unclear as to what determines HIB. As a result of the HIB training 39% of the respondents answered they were somewhat and very clear as to how to respond to such behavior. 14% answered that they were still unclear as to how to respond to HIB behavior. It is apparent that the HIB training has had an overall positive effect in informing teachers about what defines HIB behavior and how to correctly respond

to such incidents. However, with 11% and 14% of the respondents answering not clear to both there are still teachers' questions to be answered.

## **Conclusion**

After conducting this research, several conclusions can be made. First, the respondents are aware for the most part that HIB is atypical and inappropriate behavior. Those that felt it was somewhat typical behavior seemed to be unclear as to where to draw the line between typical and atypical adolescent behavior. And as a result of the HIB training their views have changed. They now are better able to distinguish HIB behavior; are better aware of the serious implications of HIB behavior towards the victim as well as the bully; and are better aware of who to contact and the process of reporting should such incidents occur. Also, respondents do not feel special education students are overwhelmingly the victim. According to previous studies the special education student may be underrepresented in this regard. They actually feel that special education students are more so the perpetrator. Special education teachers feel most strongly in both respects. They feel that special education students are more likely the victim of HIB and even more so that special education students are engaging in HIB behavior.

## **Implications for further Research**

After reading this study, there are implications for further research. There is a need to determine ways the HIB training may be improved to be more effective and help teachers who remain unclear have a better understanding of what determines HIB and how to respond to HIB behavior. Also, research to determine

underlying factors that lead teachers to feel special education students are somewhat more likely to be a victim of HIB and even more so to engage in HIB. Once these factors are identified a proactive reaction to them would be an option. As the emphasis on including students with disabilities into general education classrooms has increased, educators have been primarily focused on their academic success. Much less emphasis has been placed on social integration. While it remains important to evaluate academic progress, it is also important for students with disabilities to succeed socially. It appears that student social awareness and skills training should be an inherent part of any intervention program. Protection from abuse is a fundamental human right, others are obliged to intervene. Public schools must be and continue to be a safe environment for learning to take place. HIB incidents result in a decrease of academic potential for all students involved. A decrease in HIB incidents should provide for an increase in academic success and goals. Data from this research may also be used to compare the effectiveness of further Olweus HIB training scheduled to take place beginning in September 2012.

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## Appendix A: Teacher Survey

### Teacher Survey HIB

1. What grade(s) and subject(s) do you teach?

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2. How many years have you been teaching in this capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your present level of education?

B.A./B.S.      (1 B +)      M.A./M.S./M.Ed.

4. Are you a certified special education teacher?

No                      Yes

5. Has your school implemented HIB (Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying) training?

No                      Yes                      Not sure

6. If you answered yes to Q5, what does the training involve? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. If your school has implemented the HIB training, on a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate the overall effectiveness of the program?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not effective			somewhat effective				Very effective		

7a. In your opinion, which elements of the training were/are most effective?

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8. Many people/teachers have pre-conceived opinions in regards to HIB behaviors that are viewed as typical adolescent behavior. They are dismissed as “kids will be kids”, “it will make them stronger” or “everyone experiences it”, etc. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your perception of HIB behavior(s) prior to any training?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Typical behavior			somewhat typical behavior				Atypical/HIB behavior		

