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A STUDENT-DRIVEN APPROACH TO REDUCE BULLYING IN ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

by
Jennifer Lee Kelly

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
June 28th, 2007

Approved by
Dr. Marjorie Madden

Date Approved June 28, 2007
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ABSTRACT

Jennifer Lee Kelly

A STUDENT-DRIVEN APPROACH TO REDUCE BULYING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

2006/07

Dr. Marjorie Madden

Master of Science in Teaching in Collaborative Education

The purpose of this study is to see if a student-driven approach reduced bullying episodes in two elementary school classrooms. The subjects for this study are thirty-seven fifth grade students at the Thomas E. Bowe School in Glassboro, New Jersey. This study used two anonymous surveys, audio-taped discussions with small groups of students, students' projects and artifacts, and a teacher research journal to develop and access a student-driven approach to reduce bullying in elementary school classrooms. A qualitative and quantitative approach was utilized to analyze the data, which showed a decrease in the frequency of bullying episodes in these two classrooms. A need for further research on the effectiveness of a student-driven approach to reduce bullying in elementary classrooms is one of the implications that emerged from this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family, especially my father, for all the time they spent encouraging and supporting me throughout my past five years at Rowan University. I could not have accomplished everything without their help, “pep talks,” and hugs. I would also like to thank my fellow Co-teachers and Rowan friends for always being there. I could always count on them for a smile and a good time! In addition, I would also like to thank my cooperating teacher, Mrs. Deborah Redfield, as well as her students at the Thomas E. Bowe School for making this project possible and fun to do. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Madden for all the time she spent encouraging and helping me complete this project.

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Chapter One

Scope of the Study

Introduction

For two years, Robert, a timid ten-year old student was taunted and teased by some of his classmates at school. Robert's peers called him names, threatened him with their fists, and excluded him from all games played on the playground. "I used to love school" says a bewildered Robert, "but now I hate it." When Robert's torturers were interrogated about the bullying, they said they pursued their victim because "it was fun."

Purpose Statement

Bullying situations and scenarios such as Roberts are very common in today's schools. Even though bullies have been around since the days of the one-room schoolhouses, the act is more vicious and more deadly today. In fact, bullying is considered the major cause of school shootings and suicides among today's youth (Garrett, 2003). In addition, since 1992, there have been over 250 violent deaths in schools related to bullying (Garrett, 2003).

Certainly, bullying is a terrifying experience many schoolchildren face. Direct, physical bullying appears and increases in elementary school, peaks in middle school, and declines in high school. Verbal abuse, on the other hand, is constant in all grades (Olweus, 1993). Since bullying begins in elementary schools, aggressive anti-bullying efforts should be implemented at this level in order for students to feel safe and

comfortable in their own classrooms. Hopefully, this early intervention will also help to prevent bullying in upper grades with older and more mature students.

Many of the current anti-bullying efforts being made in schools are adult-driven and teacher-directed. Some of these efforts include surveying students, developing rules against bullying, raising awareness of bullying to parents, and teaching conflict resolution skills to students. According to the *National Association of School Psychologists*, over two-thirds of students believe that schools respond poorly to bullying, with a high percentage of students believing that adult help is infrequent and ineffective (Garrett, 2003). Since bullying is a student-centered problem, many students feel that anti-bullying efforts should be student-driven and focus on their own experiences. Unfortunately, according to professionals in this field, there has been minimal research and few studies conducted on the effectiveness of student-driven approaches to reduce bullying episodes in schools (Packman, 2005).

This particular study will therefore focus on students' perspectives of bullying in their elementary school classrooms. Participants will have the opportunity to be involved in anonymous surveys, discuss and share their views of bullying in small groups, and design projects about their own experiences and encounters with bullying. They will then use this information to develop strategies and tactics to reduce bullying and harassment behaviors in their scholastic environment. Some examples of student-driven strategies used in previous studies include students creating skits, participating in classroom and school-wide presentations, and constructing games to help educate other students about the prevalence and consequences of bullying in schools (Packman, 2005). After having

this opportunity, participants will be encouraged to reflect on their anti-bullying campaign and its overall effectiveness in reducing bullying in their classroom and school.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

Bullying and peer harassment is a problem that occurs with alarming regularity and destructive consequences in American schools. As schools struggle with how to deal with this issue, educators and researchers should focus more on the students and their experiences as an important and effective intervention to reduce bullying. Teachers and adults should act only as facilitators in order to provide students with support and ample leadership opportunities to make positive changes in their classrooms.

Based on this research problem, my question becomes, *How and what can students do to reduce bullying in their elementary school classrooms?* Sub questions based upon this research question are: *What is the most effective way to stop bullying behaviors in schools? How can teachers and adults support students' efforts? What is the effectiveness of student-driven approaches to reduce bullying in schools compared to other anti-bullying efforts?*

Story of the Question

On October 3rd, 2006, three hundred energetic fifth grade students gathered in the gymnasium of the J. Mason Tomlin School in Mantua, New Jersey for an assembly about an upcoming field trip. The trip, a three day, two night adventure to the Mount Misery Retreat Center in Browns Mill, New Jersey, was the highlight of the fifth grade school year for most students.

After the principal, "Mr. P," silenced the students with two fingers raised in the air, he explained how the purpose of this trip was to encourage teamwork and respect for

one other. "Bullying, in any form, will not be tolerated on this trip or in this school," he shouted to the eager eyed smiling students. After a brief pause, "Mr. P" posed an important and interesting question to the students. "How many students sitting here today have been bullied?" An eerie silence fell over the crowd of students as multi-colored arms shot straight up into the stale air. I looked around, in awe, as hundreds of tiny fingers wiggled in the atmosphere. Quickly scanning the gymnasium, approximately 80% of the students' hands were raised. Gazing around, "Mr. P" then asked, "Okay students, hands down please. Here is a more difficult question. How many students have bullied other students?" Once again, more hesitantly, I witnessed about 60% of students' multihued arms rise up. As I glanced around the large room for the second time, I was surprised to notice arms of students I would never consider to be a "bully" to their peers.

What is going on here? Is bullying this large of a problem among today's students in schools? With a puzzled and surprised look, I turned to the other nine fifth grade teachers seated around me for more answers. At that moment, it was evident that one of the more experienced teachers could read by mind and facial expressions. She turned and whispered, "Bullying is one of the major problems students face and a primary concern for us as teachers. There is not one answer to deal with this problem."

Throughout the rest of the assembly, I stared at the maroon stage curtain in front of me and pondered the issue of bullying. As a new practicum student, it appeared that this particular school was taking multiple measures to stop bullying. After all, "Bully Free Zone" posters hung in every classroom, one of the primary goals of the Mount Misery trip was to reduce bullying, and there was a successful character education

program implemented. However, despite these efforts, bullying was occurring in this school and it was negatively affecting the *majority* of students.

After informally speaking to the teachers at this school, as well as the guidance counselor, bullying is a serious problem across all grades and schools in the United States. In fact, the guidance counselor even shared that bullying is the number one problem facing today's youth. Even though some schools, such as this one, are addressing the problematic behaviors associated with bullying, the harassment continues to exist. Because of this, more measures need to be taken in order to deal with this nationwide crisis. *What is the best approach to reduce bullying in this school? Across the United States, how can bullying be stopped and students feel safe and comfortable in their own school communities?*

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter Two takes a more in-depth look at the related research on bullying in American schools. Topics discussed include what bullying is, prevalence of bullying, characteristics of a typical bully and victim, consequences of bullying, current anti-bullying efforts, and student-driven approaches to reduce bullying in schools. Chapter Three discusses the context of the study and describes the research design and methodology. Chapters Four and Five discuss the results of this study and its implications for further research.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Introduction

*“To the victims of bullies-there’s someone out there who can help you-just ask.
To the bullies-let’s stop this behavior. Working together, we can make a difference”
(Garrett, 2003, p.vi).*

Bullying is a significant problem facing students in today’s schools. Chapter two presents a review of the literature regarding bullying primarily in elementary school classrooms. The first section focuses on the definition of bullying, characteristics of bullies and victims, how gender affects bullying, and prevalence of bullying in American schools. The second section discusses the short-term and long-term consequences of bullying on all students and the school environment. The third section examines current anti-bullying efforts and a student-driven approach and rationale to reduce bullying among peers. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how this particular study might add to the current body of research on student-driven approaches and campaigns to reduce bullying in elementary school classrooms.

What is Bullying?

Many researchers and experts argue over the exact definition for the term, “bullying.” Dan Olweus, who is considered the leading and world authority on the issue of bullying, developed the following definition: “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, p.9). Some of these negative actions could

include name calling, slandering, taunting, physically assaulting, threatening, vandalizing, stealing, and excluding (Olweus, 1993). Despite which previous action is chosen by the bully, his or her intimidation causes a pattern of fear, humiliation, and abuse for the victim. In addition, there is usually an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim. Generally, the bully is physically and/or psychologically more powerful and he or she hopes to establish or maintain status over their victim (Olweus, 1993).

Prevalence of Bullying in American Schools

Bullying is a major problem in the nation's schools and it is negatively affecting American students. In fact, the National School Safety Center (NSSC) believes bullying is the most enduring and underrated problem in schools today (Kopasz & Smokowski, 2005). The National Mental Health and Education Center also describe how bullying is the most common form of violence in our society today because 15% to 30% of students are bullies or victims" (Kopasz & Smokowski, 2005). In addition, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recently reported approximately one in seven schoolchildren are considered a bully or a victim. Therefore, bullying directly affects about five million elementary and junior high school students in the United States daily (Beane, 1999). The National Association of School Psychologists also estimated that 160,000 American students are absent from school every day because they are fearful of being bullied (Beane, 1999).

These statistics also reveal that most bullying incidences occur in or close to school, typically in areas where there is little or no adult supervision. The two most

common sites are playgrounds and hallways (Kopasz & Smokowski, 2005) for bullies to perpetrate their victims.

Characteristics of a Typical Bully

A typical bully can be described as having an aggressive reaction pattern usually combined with physical strength (Olweus, 1993). Sanders and Phye (2004) also discussed other common characteristics of a typical bully:

- Chronically display aggressive behavior
- Control others through verbal threats and physical actions
- Are quicker to anger and use force sooner than others
- Have parents who are poor role models for getting along with others
- Have inconsistent discipline procedures at home and school
- Suffer physical and emotional abuse at home
- Create resentment and frustration in a peer group
- Exhibit obsessive or rigid actions
- Show poorer school achievement and dislike of the school environment

Besides having these common characteristics, researchers have also identified and characterized four types of bullies (Kopasz & Smokowski 2005). The first type is physical bullies, who use physical force and behaviors such as hitting, kicking, and punching. These bullies are usually boys and these bullies are the easiest to identify by their physical actions. Verbal bullies, who use words to hurt and humiliate their victims, are the second type of bullies. Even though these bullies do not leave physical scars, their words can have destructive effects on their victims. The third type, relational bullies, try to convince their peers to exclude certain students. Relational bullying is very common

among girls and it can cause feelings of rejection and exclusion in the victim. Reactive bullies are the fourth type and these students are the most difficult to identify. Typically, these bullies taunt and encourage other students to fight with them. After fighting, these bullies will claim that they were using self-defense (Kopasz & Smokowski 2005).

Characteristics of a Typical Victim

A student who is a repeated target of another student's coercive behavior becomes a victim of bullying (Olweus, 1993). Sanders and Phye (2004) describe some common characteristics of victims:

- Believe that they cannot control their environment
- Have ineffective social skills
- Are less popular than others
- Feel socially isolated
- Are physically younger, smaller and weaker than peers
- Are afraid of going to school
- Are given labels suggesting inadequacy
- May have a disability or special need
- Have family members who are over involved in their decisions and activities

Gender and Bullying

By surveying and observing students, Dan Olweus has determined an apparent relationship between bullying and gender. For example, girls frequently report being bullied by both boys and girls, while boys are more often only bullied by other boys (Olweus, 1993). Overall, by self-report, boys are more likely than girls to bully others (Olweus, 1993). In addition, boys are more likely to be physically bullied by their peers,

while girls are more likely to be the victims of rumor spreading, sexual comments, and social exclusion (Olweus, 1993). However, both genders report that verbal bullying is the most common form of bullying experienced.

Consequences of Bullying On Students

Bullying is a topic worthy of considerable investigation because there are many short and long-term effects of bullying on the bully, victim, and the bystanders in the school environment. First, bullies often experience mental health difficulties. The results of one study on bullies found that nearly one-third had attention-deficit disorder, 12.5 percent had depression, and 12.5 percent had oppositional-conduct disorder (Kopasz & Smokowski, 2005). In addition, another study found that a large number of bullies underachieve in school and in their jobs later in life (Kopasz & Smokowski, 2005). As adults, bullies often get into serious trouble. Statistics show that one in four bullies will have a criminal record before the age of thirty and many of these bullies will display aggression towards their spouses and children (Kopasz & Smokowski, 2005). In addition, studies have also suggested that adults who were bullies as children tend to raise children who become bullies as well (Kopasz & Smokowski, 2005).

Like bullies, victims also suffer many consequences. For example, students who are bullied are more likely than other students to be lonely, depressed, anxious, suffer from low self-esteem, experience suicidal thoughts, fear going to school, and avoid riding the bus (Olweus, 1993). These feelings may interfere with a student's learning, grades, attendance at school, self-esteem, and social skills. As a result, the achievement levels of victims tend to be lower than their peers and they may not be able to achieve their full academic potential. As adults and parents, victims often overreact to behaviors they

perceive as bullying and may overprotect their children instead of teaching them conflict-resolution skills.

Bullying also creates a climate of fear and disrespect in schools among those students who are neither a bully nor a victim. Bystanders, student witnesses who see or hear others being bullied, are the largest number of students who are affected by bullying. A recent study of bullying incidences on playgrounds found bystanders present in 88% of bullying situations but intervening in only 19% (Garrett, 2003). Furthermore, eighty to ninety percent of peers believe it is unpleasant to watch bullying occur and it often makes them feel unsafe and uncomfortable in school (Garrett, 2003). This uneasiness may interfere with these students academic and social ability to succeed in their classrooms.

Bullying also affects the safety of all students and faculty because there is a significant correlation between bullying and school violence incidences. Almost three-quarters of the attackers in school violence tragedies in the United States felt bullied, threatened, or persecuted prior to their violent attack (Garrett, 2003). In some cases, the experience of being bullied appeared to have been the factor in the decision to mount an attack on a particular school. One poignant example was when victims of bullying, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, opened fire into their Columbine High School classrooms on April 20th, 1999. As the two boys attacked their peers, Harris and Klebold shouted, "This is for all the people who made fun of us all these years" (Garret, 2003, p.2). This particular incidence, in which bullying was indeed a causation factor, resulted in more than a dozen deaths and injuries of students and teachers. Clearly, bullying negatively affects the school community and *all* students: the bullies, the victims, and even the

bystanders. School administrators, teachers, parents, and students therefore need to intervene and collaborate in order to stop bullying in American Schools.

Current Anti-Bullying Efforts

There have been various anti-bullying efforts and interventions that schools have used to curtail bullying. Experts (Partin, 2005) recommend the following suggestions. First, survey all students and faculty. The answers on these questionnaires help the school community to become aware of the extent of the bullying problem and provide baseline data for measuring the success of interventions. Second, develop and post rules against bullying and provide students with role-playing exercises and related assignments to teach alternative coping skills to student bullies and their victims. These exercises and assignments should be cooperative learning activities focusing on teaching conflict resolution skills. Third, since bullying episodes typically occur in areas where there is little or no adult supervision, school level supervision should be increased in locations such as bathrooms, hallways, and the playground. Fourth, a parental awareness campaign during parent-teacher conference days, through school newsletters, and parent organization meetings, should be arranged in order to encourage parents to be aware of the incidences and dangers of bullying.

Clearly, many of the current efforts and programs to deal with bullying are adult-driven and dependent upon teacher-direction or parent action. In addition, many of the popular programs used in schools such as *The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*, *The Bullying Project*, and *Bullybusters*, (Kopasz & Smokowski, 2005) were developed and are administered by adults. Even though adults should be active role models in reducing bullying among students, there are many reasons why student-problem-solving and

leadership may be the best program to use in order to create a bully-free environment in all classrooms and schools.

A Rationale for Student-Driven Approaches

Recently, especially in the wake of recent school violent attacks, the issue of bullying has been viewed as a more pertinent and serious problem in American schools. Unfortunately, many of the research studies conducted on bullying in the past thirty years are questionable because they have focused on adult opinions and perspectives of bullying (Garrett, 2003). Consequently, many of our techniques for dealing with the bullies and victims have been developed based on the inaccurate information observed and witnessed by adults. In order to truly and effectively curtail bullying, more research should be gathered and collected on students' perspectives and views of bullying. Students can then use their personal experiences to develop their own appropriate and effective approaches to reduce bullying in their classrooms.

A student-driven approach to reduce bullying would be an effective way to reduce bullying among students for many reasons. First, bullying is primarily a student-experienced problem because it is the students who are the perpetrators, victims, and the bystanders. Because of this, teachers are not always aware of bullying episodes and may not always be able to supervise all areas in which bullying may occur. Second, there are many differences between adults and students' perceptions of bullying. Since bullying can occur in subtle ways, it is sometimes challenging for adults to recognize and understand the inappropriate behaviors exhibited by students. In fact, one study found that teachers' identification of bullies and victims only matched student identification about fifty percent of the time (Packman, 2005). Studies on bullies have also indicated

that bullies typically behave when the teacher is not looking or paying attention. Teachers may also not be aware that students are bullying in less obvious ways such as spreading rumors and excluding other students from activities. Third, since there has been significant research addressing how bullying occurs within a group context with students taking different roles, Salmivalli (1999) believes that this “peer group power” is an important way to stop bullying. After all, if a larger percentage of bystanders could take action and counter the bullying behaviors as a group, the bully and his or her behavior could be curtailed. As Garrett (2003) remarked, “Once the sixty percent of children who are neither bullies nor victims adopt the attitude that bullying is an unacceptable behavior, schools are well on their way to having a successful bullying program” (p.77). Fourth, psychologist Albert Bandura believes that students should be given the power and the opportunity for “enactive learning” or “learning by doing.” By involving students in the solutions of bullying from a young age, they can learn social skills necessary to address complex issues such as racism and sexual harassment as future adults (Packman, 2005). Finally, since school bullying is an important part of the child’s world, it is important for students to be incorporated and be considered as a source of the solution in order for bullying incidences to be reduced and ultimately eliminated in classrooms and schools.

Implementation of a Student-Driven Approach

What does a student-driven anti-bullying campaign look like? Experts believe that students’ ideas, leadership, energy, and excitement are essential in order for them to develop useful and creative solutions to deal with bullying (Packman, 2005). The adults

who work with these students should support and guide them only, instead of telling the students how they should solve the problem of bullying.

Packman (2005) also believes that awareness of the prevalence of bullying among faculty and students is essential. She recommends this information be gathered by an anonymous survey. The results of this survey would provide baseline data, help teachers and administrators to understand the scope of the bullying problem in the school, and hopefully gain faculty support for an anti-bullying campaign. After all, this faculty support is essential in order for students to be encouraged and supported. As Cowie (1999) pointed out, if faculty support for student efforts is lacking, “attempts to mobilize the strength of young people to resolve their own difficulties through peer-led interventions can meet with unexpected hostility or sabotage from adults and even from other members of the peer group.” Experts recommend that teachers should receive support and in-service training on facilitating student-driven campaigns in order to guide students effectively with their ideas and suggestions.

In order to implement student led efforts to combat bullying, strategic planning must also take place. School administrators and teachers need to consider the how, when, and where the anti-bullying efforts will occur. If there is an organized plan of action with adequate time and support provided, students will feel that the adults seriously care about their ideas and actions” (Packman, 2005). Experts recommend addressing bullying in small groups of five to seven students who meet regularly with adult leaders. These adult leaders should be trained to facilitate safe discussions in which students will be encouraged to create ideas and strategies. These small groups are particularly beneficial for those students who have been victimized by bullying and may feel anxious sharing in

a large group setting. In addition, these small groups should be comprised of a variety of students from different backgrounds and cliques who volunteer to be a part of the campaign. Facilitators can recruit and excite students by assemblies, classroom presentations, and announcements. Those interested students could then be invited to planning meetings where ideas, discussions, committees, and groups could be generated and formed (Packman, 2005).

What does a student-driven approach to bullying look like? One example of a student-driven approach towards bullying was implemented by professor Jill Packman (2005) at a middle school in Nevada. After a group of interested students formed a “bullying committee,” Packman facilitated and encouraged student discussions on bullying. While discussing, the students quickly identified when and where bullying occurred and the different types of bullying. The students then used this information to create presentations, skits, games, and videotapes to depict what bullying is and how to deal with it. These students presented their information by visiting two classrooms per day for three weeks. After several weeks of successful classroom visits, the students created a banner titled, “We’re Not Gonna Take It Any More!” This banner was hung in the school cafeteria as a reminder of this particular school’s commitment to stop bullying (Packman, 2005).

Another example of a student led intervention campaign against bullying was implemented in southern Finland. This study was conducted in the seventh and eighth grades and there were 196 participants (89 girls and 107 boys). A bullying committee of eight peer counselors was formed and these students brainstormed different ideas to address bullying in their school. These students then facilitated a one week intervention

campaign, “Happy Face Week” with a series of events and activities for the school and individual classes. Some examples of the events and activities include short dramatic excerpts, large and small group discussions, posters, drawing comic strips about bullying, and writing songs on bullying. In all parts of the campaign, the peer counselors emphasized each student’s responsibility, as well as their potential to affect whether or not bullying occurs in their classroom and school. Overall, the results of this campaign were positive because students were satisfied and thought the campaign helped to reduce bullying in their school (Salmivalli, 2001). Clearly, these two examples of student-driven approaches to reduce bullying indicates the potential for students to be key players in addressing and reducing bullying in schools.

Conclusion

As the review of the literature suggests, bullying is a serious problem that can dramatically affect the ability of *all* students to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Unfortunately, since there are many short and long term consequences, early intervention and education is necessary in order to stop bullying behaviors in schools. School administrators, teachers, parents, and students need to be aware and educated on what bullying is, how and where it is occurring, and what the typical characteristics of bullies and victims are. Since bullying occurs between students and it is usually witnessed by students, students need to take a more active role and stance in curbing bullying behaviors in their classrooms and schools. School administrators and teachers can oversee this process, but anti-bullying efforts should be student-driven and student-directed. By giving students this power and opportunity to create bully-free classrooms,

students themselves will be able to stop bullying and feel safe and comfortable in their classrooms and schools with their peers.

Unfortunately, since there is little research on student-developed models of bully prevention and their outcomes, it is important for more empirical research to be conducted (Packman, 2005). It is hoped that this particular study will provide an opportunity for students to discuss bullying and develop their own strategies to reduce bullying in their classrooms and elementary school.

Chapter Three

Research Content and Design

Introduction

Anti-bullying programs and efforts in American schools attempt to reduce bullying behaviors between students. This particular study hopes to empower students to take action in their own elementary classroom and school to stop bullying.

For this study, I will be using teacher research by taking a qualitative approach. Teacher research is “systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers” (Lytle & Smith, 1993, p.5). I plan on collecting “open-ended” data through the use of surveys, audio-taped discussions with small groups of students, students’ projects and artifacts, and my own teacher research journal to develop and access a student-driven approach to reduce bullying in elementary school classrooms.

Context

School

The Glassboro Public Schools serve students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. Glassboro is a borough in Gloucester County, New Jersey, and it is the home to Rowan University, formerly Glassboro State College. Glassboro borders Elk Township, Clayton Borough, Monroe Township, Washington Township, Harrison Township, Mantua Township, and Pitman Borough.

The Thomas E. Bowe Elementary School is located in Glassboro, New Jersey and students in grades 4-6 attend this school. According to the *New Jersey Department of*

Education 2004-2005 School Report Card, there were 492 students enrolled in the school and 95.9% of the students spoke English as a first language at home. In terms of average class size, there are approximately 19.7 students in each class. In addition, the school day is six hours long from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. everyday. Every classroom in the school has internet connectivity and most classrooms have at least one computer for students to use. Every school year, the district spends approximately \$11,592 per pupil.

The teachers, faculty, and administrators are an important part of the Thomas E. Bowe Elementary School. There are 246 students per administrator and 11.2 faculty members per student. Approximately seventy-five percent of the faculty and administrators have obtained a bachelor's degree and twenty-five percent have obtained a master's degree.

Participants

There are approximately forty fifth grade students involved in this study. All students in a first and second period health class were solicited to participate in this study. However, only those students who returned a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian were able to participate. The participants were both male and female, and these students ranged in ages from ten to twelve years old. Approximately two-thirds of the participants were Caucasian and one-third were African American.

In addition, according to school records, approximately one-half of the participants came from two parent households and one-half came from single-parent households. In addition, the socioeconomic status of participants and their families ranged from middle to lower-middle class; however many more families fell within the

lower-middle socioeconomic category. A small percentage of participants and their families could be categorized in the low socioeconomic category.

Research Design/ Methodology

The design of this research is primarily qualitative, with additional quantitative teacher research. Qualitative inquiry strategies such as a survey, audio-taped discussions with small groups of students, students' projects and artifacts, and my own teacher research journal are used. Quantitative data is also collected from a survey given before and after the project is implemented. The results of this survey are used to determine students' understanding about the topic of bullying and if the student-driven interventions decrease bullying incidents. After all data is collected and analyzed, overlapping themes and concepts are identified in order to determine similarities in students' experiences with bullying and the effectiveness of a student-driven approach to reduce bullying in elementary school classrooms.

Sources of Data

For this study, five data collection instruments are used: two surveys, audio-taped discussions between small groups of students, students' projects and artifacts, and my own teacher research journal. Before any types of data are collected, an introductory letter (Appendix A) was distributed to the students' parents and/or guardians. This letter informed them of the project and requested their written permission to allow their child to be a participant.

The first two instruments used were anonymous surveys distributed to approximately forty students in two health classes. The first survey, "This Week in School," (Appendix B) is adopted from the book, The Bully Free Classroom (Beane,

1999, pgs. 26-27). This survey describes things that might happen to a student during a typical week at school. About fifty percent of the statements are pleasant and the other fifty percent are unpleasant. Because of this, students are able to focus on their overall experiences and encounters in school, rather than their occurrences with bullying. The survey asks the students to reflect on their previous week: it was administered on Friday, March 30th, 2007. In order to score the survey, the teacher researcher adds up the number of times a checkmark is placed under the category “more than once” for the following statements:

- 4. tried to kick me
- 8. said they’d beat me up
- 10. tried to make me give them money
- 23. tried to hurt me
- 36. tried to break something of mine
- 38. tried to hit me

The teacher researcher then divides the score for each statement by the number of surveys completed in order to get the percentage of student responses. These percentages are then added together and divided by six, which is the number of statements. This overall percentage gives the teacher researcher an idea of how many students in the classroom are being bullied or at risk of being bullied (Beane, 1999, p.25). The teacher researcher does the same calculations for the checkmarks placed under “once” for the six key statements. This percentage gives the teacher researcher an idea of the level of aggression in the classroom. In addition, because this survey asks the students to indicate their gender, the gender differences are also examined by the teacher researcher.

The second survey, “Bullying Survey” (Appendix C) is also adopted from the book, The Bully Free Classroom (Beane, 1999, pgs. 28-30). In this survey, questions regarding where bullying happens, the frequency of bullying episodes, characteristics of bullies, specific behaviors of bullying, and students’ responses to bullying are asked. In addition, students also have the opportunity to share ways to prevent or stop bullying in their classroom. In the last part of this survey, students are also asked demographic information such as gender and age. This information is gathered in order to determine whether bullies are targeting a particular group of students and to help ensure that the small groups of students pre-selected by the teacher researcher are diverse. After all students complete their surveys, the teacher researcher collects and examines each survey and looks for commonalties between them.

The third and fourth instruments that are used are audio-taped discussions between students and artifacts developed by students as a result of these discussions. After all students completed the surveys, the teacher researcher forms small groups of four to six students. These small groups are formed in order to have a safe and comfortable environment for discussion between students. Each small group of students is called a “bullying committee” and these students discuss and research bullying, as well as brainstorm ways to reduce bullying in their classrooms and school. The students meet in their small groups for approximately twenty minutes a day for three weeks. The teacher researcher, as well as the classroom teacher, monitors all groups when they are working. The teacher researcher also meets with individual groups and prompts them with oral questions (Appendix D). Students’ answers are audio-recorded and are used as a source of data for the teacher researcher. In addition, during this time, students’ artifacts

such as anti-bullying posters, writings, pictures, and skits are also examined and gathered as sources of data for the teacher researcher.

After students brainstorm and implement different strategies to reduce bullying in their classroom and school, the teacher researcher re-administers the survey, “This Week in School” (Beane, 1999, pgs. 26-27). This survey is given again in order to see if the percentages of students being bullied, at risk for being bullied, and the level of aggression in the classroom decreased after the student-driven interventions are implemented.

The fifth data instrument is a journal kept by the teacher researcher. The teacher researcher records her thoughts, questions, observations, and feelings regarding information gained from the students during this project.

Data Analysis

The surveys, students’ recorded discussions and artifacts, and the teacher research journal are used to draw conclusions regarding bullying and student-driven approaches to reduce bullying in elementary school classrooms. The qualitative data is analyzed by using direct quotes, written answers and artifacts from the participants, as well as written observations from the teacher researcher. This information is organized and examined for similarities and differences. The quantitative data is analyzed by comparing the different percentages on the survey, “This Week in School” before and after the students’ interventions to stop bullying in their classroom and school.

Looking Ahead

Chapter four discusses the results of the surveys, students’ discussions and artifacts, as well as pertinent information written in the teacher research journal. Chapter five will present the implications of the study and recommendations for further study.

Chapter Four

Findings of the Study

Introduction

Chapter four discusses the findings of the study. Responses from the two surveys, students' projects and artifacts, audio-taped discussions with small groups of students, and my own teacher research journal are used to draw conclusions regarding a student-driven approach to bullying in two fifth grade classes at the Thomas E. Bowe School in Glassboro, New Jersey.

Research Findings

Survey Responses

On March 30th, 2007, the two anonymous surveys, "This Week in School" and "Bullying Survey" were administered to thirty-seven students in two health classes. In these two classes, students reported that there were twenty-two females and eight male students. Seven students chose not to report their gender on these surveys. Students also reported there were fourteen ten year old students, twenty-two eleven year old students, and one student who was twelve years old.

The survey, "This Week in School" was administered in order to estimate the number of students in the classroom being bullied or at risk of being bullied before the student-driven interventions were implemented. In addition, it was also used to measure the level of aggression in the classroom. On this particular day as reported, 13.3% of students were being bullied or at risk for being bullied. The level of aggression in the

classroom was 17.8%. Approximately one month later after the student-driven interventions were implemented, this particular survey was re-administered on May 3rd, 2007. As reported on this particular day, 10.6% of the students were being bullied or at risk for being bullied and the level of aggression in the classroom was 17.1%.

The percentage for students being bullied or at risk for being bullied, as well as the level of aggression decreased in these two classrooms. Since the percentage for students being bullied or at risk for being bullied decreased by approximately 20%, this percent of decrease seemed important considering the amount of time students spent in their bullying committees. For this particular study, students spent approximately twenty minutes in their bullying committees for approximately twenty days. In addition, this time frame seems noteworthy considering the time of the school year. As veteran classroom teachers know, the end of the school year is often a time that is not as productive in terms of student learning and engagement compared to the fall and winter months. The following teacher research anecdotal record described the concern for the time of the school year that this study was administered:

The students appear to be enjoying this project and working in their bullying committees. However, I am quite concerned that they are not putting the time, energy, and effort into their projects as I had hoped. It seems like all of the students have “spring fever” and no longer want to be in school or with their classmates. I can almost feel the anticipation as the spring approaches and it seems like the students are being restless and temperamental with their teachers and classmates. I think everyone needs a break from one another and I wonder if

the end of the school year with the warm temperatures was an appropriate time to implement this study.

Taken from *Teacher Research Journal*, April 19, 2007

The chart that is shown below contains data that reflects students' responses for selected questions for the two anonymous surveys that were administered on March 30th and May 3rd, 2007:

Chart 1: Students' Responses for Selected Questions

This week in school, another student in my class:	Once (March 30 th , 2007)	Once (May 3 rd , 2007)	More than once (March 30 th , 2007)	More than once (May 3 rd , 2007)
4. tried to kick me	24%	27%	30%	14%
8. said they'd beat me up	16%	32%	14%	0%
10. tried to make me give them money	16%	11%	0%	0%
23. tried to hurt me	16%	8%	11%	19%
36. tried to break something of mine	8%	14%	11%	8%
38. tried to hit me	27%	11%	14%	19%

The percentages on the above chart reveal many findings. For example, students reported that the most common way to bully another student was, "tried to kick me." The second most common response was "tried to hit me." These two responses indicate that there is significant physical bullying occurring in these two classes. The least reported response was "tried to make me give them money." This response reveals that there is not significant intimidation and threatening occurring in these two classes.

The results of the “Bullying Survey,” suggest the following:

1. Students believed that bullying occurs more often outside of the classroom at recess, lunch time, in the bathroom, or in the halls of the school compared to the actual classroom.
2. Students judged that bullying episodes happen about once a day.
3. Students described how bullies usually “call them names” or “make fun of them by making mean comments.”
4. Students depicted the bully as being their age and being both male and female.
5. Students explained that they had not often told anyone at school that they were being bullied. For those students who had shared this information, the majority of these students shared this information with a trusted teacher. This teacher then spoke to the bully privately. However, students noted that bullying behaviors did not stop as a result of this intervention.
6. Students also revealed that many of them had never bullied another student. For those who admitted to bullying others, these students “called the person names because he or she was getting on their nerves.” At first this experience made them feel good, but then the students described how they felt “bad” for their intimidating actions.
7. Some popular responses on how bullying can be stopped in the classroom included:
 - a. separating the bully and the victim
 - b. telling a teacher
 - c. educating students on how to stop bullying

- d. setting up a club for students to talk about bullying

It is interesting to note that the majority of students who were being bullied often turned to a trusted teacher to address this problem. This was true in spite of the fact that bullying behaviors did not stop as a direct result of this teacher intervention. This revelation suggests that other intervention measures are needed to really diminish the problem of bullying in elementary schools.

Student Artifacts and Work

After all students completed the two anonymous surveys, the teacher researcher arranged the students in each health class into small bullying committees of four to six students by having the students count off by numbers. Independently, the students attempted to develop their own definition of bullying. These definitions were then shared with members of their bullying committees, and each committee developed their own definition. These group definitions were shared and a class definition was developed. One class's definition of bullying was:

“Bullying is an unfair treatment from a bigger, tougher person to a smaller and weaker person. It usually affects their social and intellectual health, as well as school work, grades, and friendships.”

The other class's definition of bullying was:

“Bullying is an act of anger. People take their feelings out on others. The bullies have low self-esteem which makes the victims have low self-esteem too. Bullies make victims feel like they have no purpose to live and make victims feel angry.”

The teacher researcher displayed each class's definition in their respective classrooms for all students to look at. The teacher researcher then explained to the students that they will

be working in small groups to stop bullying in their own classroom and also in the school. This practice was noted in the teacher's research journal:

Today, I explained to my two health classes how they will be brainstorming and implementing different ways to stop bullying in their classroom and school. At first, the students seemed very confused and unenthusiastic. I do not think they are use to having a lot of opportunities for student-centered activities and opportunities to work in groups. In addition, I do not think students are given opportunities to feel "empowered" and be agents of change. However, after giving a brief overview of different interventions students have done at other schools, the students seemed to be more interested and excited about the project.

Taken from teacher research journal, April 6, 2007

Working in their bullying committees, each group compiled a list of ways to stop bullying in their classroom and at the Thomas E. Bowe School. Each group's ideas were used and arranged into a class list.

One class's list read:

1. Talking to the administration about having an anti-bullying assembly run by students.
2. Students doing small presentations in other classrooms to educate students about bullying.
3. Hanging anti-bullying posters around the school.
4. Having an anti-bullying day where students would talk to other students they would normally not talk to.
5. Writing and performing skits and songs.

6. Writing and distributing an anti-bullying magazine.
7. Sticking up for the victim and befriending the bully.

The second class's list read:

1. Write and sign a class pledge saying that we should not give in to bullying.
2. Make anti-bullying posters for the hallways.
3. Make, copy and distribute a comic strip to all students in the school.
4. Interview students and have students share their experiences in school assembly.
5. Write stories, songs and poems about bullying and share with other students.
6. Tell teachers and guidance counselors.
7. Have a hall/classroom monitor that makes sure students are not being bullied.

After reviewing both lists with all of the students, the teacher researcher and the students decided that they would do three things on their lists in an effort to stop or reduce bullying in their classroom and in the school. The first project that the students worked on was constructing a song about bullying in their small groups. Students worked on writing and performing anti-bullying songs for a three day period. The students then presented their songs in the other fifth grade classrooms. An example of one bullying committee's song was:

Oh my gosh!

Today in school, I am learning about bullying.

Pushing, shoving, hurting, it is not that cool.

These tips will help me and you!

Keep a diary entry, avoid the bully and tell an adult.

These bullies are mean to me and you.

Let's ignore the bully and remember violence isn't the answer too.

You have the right to go to school.

And remember kids, bullying isn't cool.

You have the right to be happy!

Don't bully!

A second example of a song was:

Being called a name

Makes you feel real lame

While you get bullied,

They get all the fame.

They don't really hate you,

They have troubles at places.

They hit people, smack people,

Put frowns on their faces.

Bullies, bullies think they're fine.

They get in trouble all the time.

Talking things over with a friend,

Can maybe put bullying to an end

When you are bullied,

Remember what to do.

Ignore the bully and

Just be you!

Overall, the students did an excellent job composing and performing their songs. An example of an entry written by the teacher researcher relating to the composition of these songs was:

Wow! The students have just performed their anti-bullying songs for the other fifth grade classes and they were great! My cooperating teacher and I were really impressed with their written pieces, as well as their performances. I noticed that the students included a lot of facts, information, and advice about bullying in their songs. This shows me that they are really learning about bullying and trying to educate the other students about bullying in order to stop bullying in their classroom and school.

Taken from teacher research journal, April 13. 2007

Clearly, this entry shows the importance and the impact that the students made on other students with this song. Besides the bullying committees writing and performing songs, the committees also constructed large posters with slogans for the hallways. Some of the slogans the students developed were:

- Don't be blue! Just be you! Don't let bullying get to you!
- Become friends and bullying ends!
- Bullies stop calling me names and leaving me in shame!
- Don't be mean, be a team!
- When you are a teaser, the respect you get is meager!
- Big Bullies = Small Brains!
- Bullies be gone at the Thomas E. Bowe School!
- We are a cool bully-free school!

Each bullying committee also wrote and performed skits depicting bullying episodes and how to stop bullying if a student witnesses bullying occurring. These skits were performed for the other bullying committees and in another fifth grade classroom.

Independently, students also had the opportunity to complete a project called, "Putting a Face on It," (Appendix E) at home. This project was a part of a video series called, "Bullying: You Don't Have to Take It Anymore." Students were given one week to complete this assignment and then all students were encouraged to share their projects in class. Students were expected to recall a personal experience with bullying and describe how the experience made them feel. Some examples of projects that students constructed were posters, short stories, poems, comic strips, collages, musical compositions, videos, and skits. The following is one example of a student's poem titled, "Standing Up."

It all started yesterday.

It's very plain to see.

That I'm standing up for others

And I'm standing up for me.

No bullies can destroy this smile.

No teasers make it fade.

Those rude remarks that are really smart,

All seem so far away.

No meanies burst my bubble,

Or dare to tease my friends.

I'm feeling great,

I'm standing tall,
I hope this never ends.
So I'm standing up.
And I'm moving on.
I leave them all so far behind.
Those who think they are so strong
Those bullies, teasers, meanies
Are behind me by a mile.
I'm forgetting all of them
And keeping on my smile.

Other examples of projects constructed by students are found in Appendix F.

A Closer Look at Bullying

While the students were working in their bullying committees on their different projects, the teacher researcher also had the opportunity to meet with each group. During these time periods, the teacher researcher asked the students ten questions and audio-taped their responses. Responses to each question are shown below. They are listed in order of frequency, with the letter A being the most frequent response.

1. What is bullying?

- A) When one person physically or emotionally hurts another person
- B) A bigger/tougher person picking on a smaller/weaker person

These responses are consistent with the definition of bullying that was revealed in the review of the literature. An expert on bullying, Dan Olweus states, "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, p.9). Olweus’s definition is very similar to the definition described by the students.

2. Where does bullying occur the most?

- A) In school
- B) In the hallways
- C) At recess on the playground
- D) Occurs when the teacher is not looking
- E) On the bus

These answers indicate that bullying occurs most frequently in school. One probable reason why bullying occurs more often in school is that students collectively spend the greatest amount of time with their peers in school. In addition, since students reported that bullying incidences happen “in the hallways, at recess, when the teacher is not looking, and on the bus,” this fact reveals that bullying incidences happen in areas where there is little supervision by adults. This revelation was also seen in the researcher’s review of the literature by Kopasz and Smokowski (2005) who found that the two most common sites for bullying are the playground and the hallways.

3. What makes someone a “bully?” What makes someone a “victim?”

Bully:

- A) Someone is a bully if they try to hurt someone with actions or words
- B) Someone who harasses a weaker person by teasing or physically hurting them

Victim:

- A) Someone is a victim if they are picked on or treated unfairly by a

bigger and/or tougher person

B) Someone who is abused by hurtful words or actions

These responses show that students are very aware of the characteristics of a bully and a victim. Because students were able to describe a bully and a victim with relative ease, many of these students probably witnessed the actions of a bully on his/her victim. Moreover, these same students could probably name a student in their class who could be described as a bully or a victim.

4. How does it feel being a “bully?” How does it feel being a “victim?”

Bully:

A) Feel tough and cool

B) Feel powerful

C) Feel bad because you have to live with guilt

Victim:

A) Feel sad and upset

B) Feel scared

C) Don't like going to school

These responses are once again consistent with the review of the literature findings which reveal that students have experienced being a bully or a victim of a bully at some time in their educational environment.

5. Why do students bully other students?

A) To feel strong and powerful

B) To get attention

C) To become popular

D) It is fun

E) Want to make people laugh

These answers, again consistent with literature findings, confirm that students bully other students in order to gain power and control over them. Students also bully one another in order to gain attention and approval from their peers.

2. Are you ever afraid of being bullied at school?

No:

A) Stand up for myself

B) Stay away from bullies

C) Ignore bullies

Yes:

A) There are a lot of bullies in school

B) My classmates are mean

It was very surprising that the majority of students responded that they were not afraid of being bullied at school. This answer was noteworthy considering how many students could easily describe the concept of bullying and list the high frequency of bullying episodes that happened in the classroom and in the school. In addition, considering the age of the students, it was surprising that many of the students said they would, “stand up for myself.” This was a very brave and mature answer from students whose age ranged from ten to twelve years old.

7. How often do you think bullying occurs in our classroom and school?

A) Several times a day

B) Once a day

C) Once a week

The responses to this question are consistent with the literature review and demonstrate that bullying is a significant problem in today's schools with bullying episodes happening on a daily basis both in classrooms and in the school environment.

8. Do you think adults (teachers, parents, aides, the principal, etc) help to stop bullying in our classroom and school?

A) No, because normally they do not know when it is going on

B) No, because bullies do not care and they will always keep bullying other students

C) Yes, because they are the ones who prevent bullying from happening

Once again, the responses to this question are consistent with ideas revealed in a review of the literature by Packman (2005). Moreover, since bullying behaviors can be subtle at times, adults may not always be aware that bullying is occurring at a particular moment. Finally, since bullying is peer-driven, adult intervention may not be as effective as peer intervention over time since students are more often with their peers than with supervising adults.

9. How can we stop bullying in our classroom?

A) Educate/talk to students about bullying

B) Ignore the bullies

C) Tell the teacher or an adult

D) Unsure

The answers to this question reveal again that the ways to stop bullying depend more on student driven solutions rather than on adult interventions.

10. How can we stop bullying in our school?

- A) Have an anti-bullying assembly
- B) Have an anti-bullying day
- C) Hang up anti-bullying posters in the hallways
- D) Unsure

The answers to this question reveal how students need many high profile (assemblies, special days, posters) ways for the entire student body to focus on and correct the problem of bullying in school. Heightened awareness and a common focus on the problem of bullying will help to alleviate or stop bullying in the school.

Summary of Findings

After examining the data sources, several themes regarding bullying and a student-driven approach to reduce bullying in elementary school classrooms emerge:

1. Bullying: A Significant Problem Known to Students
2. Characteristics of a Bully and a Victim
3. Location of Bully Incidents
4. Intervention Methods by Adults
5. Intervention Methods by Students

Bullying: A Significant Problem Known to Students

According to the students, as well as the literature, bullying is a significant problem in today's schools. Bullying is serious because it affects all students: the bullies, the victims, and the bystanders. In both health classes, students were able to describe or depict a bullying experience they had encountered in school. This is significant because the educational environment is often viewed as a safe and positive learning community

by teachers and administration. Unfortunately, this learning community is tainted by bullying behaviors such as physical aggression, verbal threats, and teasing.

Characteristics of a Bully and a Victim

In addition, students in this study were very aware of the characteristics of a bully and a victim, and how each felt when bullying or being bullied. Once again, this shows that bullying affects all students. Furthermore, students also knew reasons why students bullied other students, and the majority of students indicated that they are not afraid of bullies or being bullied in school.

Location of Bullying Incidents

Students in this study and the literature also describe how bullying occurs the most in school. Bullying takes place in school because the students are with their peers for an extended period of time. In addition, the results of the study support the findings of Kopasz and Smokowski (2005) who found that bullying occurs the most in areas where students are not properly supervised by adults.

Intervention Methods by Adults

In terms of bullying, the majority of students surveyed, as well as the findings revealed in a review of the literature support the concept that adults can not stop bullying unilaterally. Simply stated, bullying is a problem caused and experienced by students. Since students can not properly be supervised at all times by adults, it is very difficult for adults to know who, when, and where the bullying episodes are occurring in schools. Therefore, their interventions cannot solve completely the problem of bullying in our schools.

Intervention Methods by Students

In terms of the student interventions, many students seemed almost surprised and apprehensive at the idea and opportunity that they could be involved with preventing and stopping bullying in their classrooms and in the school. When students were completing their group and independent anti-bullying projects, these students were very attentive and excited over the fact that they could make a real difference in the bullying problem in their school. The energy and efforts exercised by these students demonstrated the large potential that students could be key players in addressing the problem of bullying in their school. Based on the quantitative data collected in the anonymous surveys, "This Week in School," it was found that students were able to significantly reduce the frequency of bullying episodes in the school environment. However, the level of aggression in their classrooms and school did not diminish as dramatically as the frequency of bullying episodes. Possible reasons for this are the duration of the study, time of the school year, and the students not honestly answering the survey the pre-survey.

Finally, since the frequency of bullying episodes decreased, it can be assumed that the student-driven intervention program was successful in these two classes. Therefore, school wide anti-bullying efforts could greatly benefit from getting the full involvement of students in this student-driven program. Even though most bullying prevention programs today commonly rely on adults as the primary members of this social intervention effort, further research should be conducted on school-wide student-driven models of bully prevention programs to determine the effectiveness of this strategy.

Chapter Five

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Introduction

Bullying is a serious problem in today's schools and for some students it can be a terrifying experience that they face on a daily basis. Even though teachers and administrators strive to provide a safe learning community for students, the school environment is sometimes tarnished and tainted by bullies with their aggressive behaviors. Unfortunately, in some cases, seemingly innocent bullying practices or put-downs can soon escalate into violent attacks or even result in the tragic death of a student. Currently, most educators and school officials attempt to stop bullying by relying on adult-driven programs. However, since bullying is caused and experienced mainly by students, these programs are often ineffective because adults may not be aware that bullying is occurring around them. Because of this fact, researchers are now searching for better anti-bullying programs to curtail episodes of bullying in schools. The purpose of this study is to determine if a student-driven approach helped to reduce bullying in two fifth grade classrooms.

Conclusions and Implications

There were many interesting findings that emerged from this study. These findings should be valuable for educators in their efforts to reduce bullying in our schools. This study found that a student-driven approach decreased the frequency of bullying episodes in two classes within the school. However, the level of aggression in

these two classes remained about the same level. Based on these mixed results, it is suggested that there is a real need for further research on the effectiveness of a student-driven approach towards the problem of bullying.

Through student questionnaires, discussions with students, and by examining students' projects, it was revealed that bullying certainly is a significant problem in today's schools. Many students were able to describe bullying episodes with ease since they experienced bullying first-hand in their classroom and in the school environment. Despite students reporting that bullying happens daily in school, the majority of students surprisingly reported that they were not afraid of being bullied. In addition, many students described how adults have little effect on stopping bullying between students because adults often do not know it is occurring and some bullies may not stop their actions even if there is direct adult intervention.

Therefore, in order to truly stop bullying in American schools, it is essential for students to be involved and feel empowered in anti-bullying programs. In various data sources in the study, students expressed different logical ways to stop bullying in their classrooms and in the school. It is important for teachers and administrators to provide students with sufficient time and valuable resources to implement different anti-bullying strategies. Even though some faulty members may object to this student-centered approach, it is important for faculty members to serve as facilitators and mentors to guide students in their efforts. By following this practice, students will become "agents of change" empowered to solve the serious problem of bullying in today's schools.

Recommendations for Further Research

Overall, there is a need for further research on the effectiveness of a student-driven approach towards bullying. For example, further research should be conducted in different schools and with students of different ages. In addition, students in all classrooms should be given the opportunity to brainstorm and implement strategies in order to enhance school wide anti-bullying efforts. Furthermore, since students participated in this study for only twenty days, future studies should encourage the students to be studied for a longer period of time. The lasting results and effectiveness of a student-driven approach could be more accurately evaluated if a longer time period was used to study and measure students' behaviors.

In addition, due to the time constraints, some of the students' suggestions discussed in the surveys and informal discussions were not implemented. For example, the students did not have time to prepare a school-wide assembly program, host a bully-free day, write a class pledge, and publish an anti-bullying magazine. It would have been interesting if the students were able to fully implement these anti-bullying strategies and measure the impact of these intervention measures on the total school population.

Furthermore, in order for a student-driven approach to be truly effective, it is essential for the faculty to be open-minded and properly trained. For this particular study, the faculty involved did not receive any prior training on the issue of bullying utilizing a student-driven approach. This is an important consideration for future studies since a review of the literature reveals student-driven anti-bullying programs need adults to be properly trained. For example, adults who work with the students must resist the temptation to tell the students how they should solve the problem of bullying or what

actions they should take. In addition, it is also essential for the faculty to recognize bullying as a real problem for students so they can address this problem in a meaningful way to benefit the needs of students. This empathetic approach coupled with necessary resources will provide a supportive environment for students. Moreover, since some students may have been victimized by bullying, it is important that faculty members create a safe atmosphere for students to share their bullying experiences with others. Staff members should also receive training in counseling skills which will enable them to facilitate safe discussions in their classrooms to decrease bullying practices.

Future research could also be conducted in similar schools to compare results of various student-driven anti-bullying programs. The population of two classes investigated in this study was small, with the participants coming from only one grade and one school. A future study may consider using a greater number of students from several different school districts. This would allow the researcher to see if the results found in this study could be generalized to a larger population.

In conclusion, since bullying is a significant problem in today's schools, more and effective steps need to be taken to stop bullying between students. Even though traditional adult-driven programs exist in our schools today, the results of this study suggest that students should take a greater role in preventing and stopping bullying in their classrooms and schools. Accordingly, there should be further research and studies conducted on the effectiveness of student-driven approaches to reduce bullying in elementary school classrooms.

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APPENDIX A

Introductory Letter

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am a graduate student in the Collaborative Education (Co-Teach) Department at Rowan University. I will be conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Midge Madden as part of my master's thesis concerning bullying in elementary schools and classrooms. I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this study. The goal of the study is to determine if a student-driven approach reduces bullying in elementary school classrooms.

Each child will be given the opportunity to discuss and reflect on bullying in their classroom and school environment. In small groups, the students will work cooperatively to discuss this issue and brainstorm different ways to stop bullying in their classroom and school. The data collected in this study will be based on anonymous surveys, audio-taped discussions with small groups of students, students' projects and artifacts, and anecdotal notes and observations. To preserve each child's confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used for each student's name. All data will be reported in terms of group results; individual results will not be reported.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in this study will have absolutely no effect on your child's standing in his or her health class. Participation is voluntary and consent can be withdrawn at any time. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at (856) 589-5130 or Dr. Midge Madden at (865) 256-4500 ext. 3834. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Kelly

Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below and returning this section to your child's teacher by March 30, 2007.

_____ I grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

_____ I do not grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

Survey: “This Week in School”

This Week In School

Directions: Read each statement and think about your past week at the Thomas E. Bowe School. Please put a checkmark in the column that describes how often that statement happened to you during the past week.

Today's date: _____

Please check the appropriate box:

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Choose not to report

This week in school, another student in my class:	Never	Once	More than once
1. called me names			
2. said something nice to me			
3. said something rude or mean about my family			
4. tried to kick me			
5. treated me with kindness and respect			
6. was mean to me because I'm different			
7. gave me a present			
8. said they'd beat me up			
9. gave me some money			
10. tried to make me give them money			
11. tried to scare me			
12. loaned me something I wanted to borrow			
13. stopped me from playing a game			
14. was mean about something I did			
15. talked about clothes with me			
16. told me a joke			
17. told me a lie			
18. got other kids to gang up on me			
19. tried to make me hurt someone else			
20. smiled at me			

This week in school, another student in my class:	Never	Once	More than once
21. tried to get me in trouble			
22. helped me carry something			
23. tried to hurt me			
24. helped me with my schoolwork			
25. made me do something I didn't want to do			
26. talked about TV with me			
27. took something away from me			
28. shared something with me			
29. said something rude or mean about the color of my skin			
30. shouted at me			
31. played a game with me			
32. tried to trip me			
33. talked with me about things I like			
34. laughed at me in a way that hurt my feelings			
35. said they would tell on me			
36. tried to break something of mine			
37. told a lie about me			
38. tried to hit me			
39. make me feel bad about myself			
40. made me feel good about myself			

APPENDIX C

Survey: “Bullying Survey”

Bullying Survey

Directions: Read each question and please answer it as honestly as you can. When answering, please keep this definition in mind:

Bullying is when a stronger, more powerful person frightens a smaller or weaker person deliberately (on purpose) and repeatedly (again and again).

1. Is anyone mean to you when you are **inside** our classroom? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If *yes*, what do they do to you?

How often does this happen? (Once a day? Twice a day? Several times a day? Once a week? Once a month?)

Your answer: _____

2. Is anyone mean to you when you are **outside** of our classroom at recess, lunch time, in the bathroom, or in the halls of our school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If *yes*, what do they do to you?

How often does this happen? (Once a day? Twice a day? Several times a day? Once a week? Once a month?)

Your answer: _____

3. Without naming the bully (or bullies) describe him or her by checking statements in the list:

The bully is ...

_____ About my age

_____ Older than me

_____ Younger than me

_____ A boy

_____ A girl

_____ A whole group

How else would you describe the bully or bullies?

4. Have you ever told anyone at school that you are being bullied? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If *no*, why did you not tell someone?

If *yes*, who did you tell?

What did the person do to help you?

After you told, did the bullying stop? ☐ Yes ☐ No

After you told, did the bullying get worse? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. How has bullying affected your life and school experiences?

6. How does bullying make you feel?

7. Have you ever bullied someone else?

☐

Yes

☐

No

If you answered *yes*:

What did you do? _____

Why did you do it? _____

How did it make you feel? _____

8. Are you bullying anyone right now?

☐

Yes

☐

No

If you answered *yes*, would you like to stop?

☐

Yes

☐

No

9. What can we do to stop or prevent bullying in our classroom?

10. Demographic Data:

a) Please check the appropriate box:

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Choose not to report

b) Age: _____

APPENDIX D

Bullying Oral Prompts

1. What is bullying?
2. Where does bullying occur the most?
3. What makes someone a “bully?” What makes someone a “victim?”
4. How does it feel being a “bully?” How does it feel being a “victim?”
5. Why do students bully other students?
6. Are you ever afraid of being bullied at school?
7. How often do you think bullying occurs in our classroom and school?
8. Do you think adults (teachers, parents, aides, the principal, etc.) help to stop bullying in our classroom and school?
9. How can we stop bullying in our classroom?
10. How can we stop bullying in our school?

APPENDIX E

“Putting a Face on It” Project

PUTTING A FACE ON IT

Have you ever been bullied? Have you ever seen someone else bullied? Have you ever bullied another person? Chances are, you can answer yes to at least one of these questions.

Think of a personal experience you have had with bullying. Remember that a bully can be any age, male or female, stranger or best friend. Use the ideas below to express how the experience made you feel. You may also think of your own way to tell the story.

- Using tempera or poster paints, create a large mural on poster board or butcher paper.
- Write a short story about the event. Feel free to change the names of the main characters.
- If you play a musical instrument, compose a short tune and share it with the class. Depending on your feelings, it might be slow and thoughtful, or loud and frenzied.
- Compose a poem to describe your feelings about the event. The poem might tell a story or simply express a deep emotion.
- Draw a cartoon or a comic strip describing what happened. You may focus the cartoon on a fantasy character, a superhero or a real-life person.
- Create a collage using images from magazines and newspapers. Choose images that tell a story or describe a feeling.
- Write and perform a one-person skit for the class. You may choose to videotape your performance.

APPENDIX F

Student Projects

Bullying

A Poem by a Fifth Grade Student

Bullying is mean,
It should be a crime.
It happens a lot,
But it is not always seen.
Once I did see it,
One boy pushing another.
So I told a teacher,
And it really bothered her.
She told the bully to stop.
Then she called his parents,
There followed a LOUD long talk.
I still see bullying,
I can't stop every fight,
But I'll try to step in,
Change wrong to right.

Stand Up For Yourself!

A Story by a Fifth Grade Student

When I was in kindergarten, I was even shorter than I am now. There was a boy who would always call me, “shrimp!” I told my teacher what he said. She took me down to his classroom and told his teacher what happened. His teacher talked to him and told him that it was not right to tease people about their height. This did not stop him though. The next day on the playground he said it again.

He was really beginning to hurt my feelings. My teacher said that I was petite and to try to ignore him. So the next day, I tried ignoring him to see if he would stop. After a few days of me ignoring him, he finally got discouraged and stopped teasing me.

The lesson I learned from this experience was that you can stand up for yourself without physically fighting back. Bullies want you to be scared and by showing you are not scared takes the fun out of it for them. Unfortunately after they stop picking on you, they may move onto someone else.

My advice to you is that if you have ever been a victim of a bully or are a victim now, ignore the bully and use humor to make yourself feel better.

