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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SCHOOL-WIDE ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAM

by
Toni Anne Conoshenti-Johnson

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
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Approved by

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ABSTRACT

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SCHOOL-WIDE ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAM
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Dr. Dennis Hurley
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A safe and civil environment in school is necessary in order for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Conversely, harassment, intimidation and/or bullying, disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe environment. Students learn by example, therefore, school administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers are encouraged and commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and for refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying. Through on-site research and review of current literature, I was interested in finding out student's perceptions about bullying. The thesis was designed to share data resulting from a student survey on harassment and bullying. Data was collected and reviewed from sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students at Middle Township Middle School in Cape May Court House, NJ. In addition, part of my thesis focuses on our school implementation of the state mandated policy on bullying and harassment.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank several people who contributed to my success in the master's graduate thesis process. My building principal, Amos Kraybill, has been an inspirational force throughout my internship career. His support and guidance in dealing with school issues has influenced my experiences and desire to become a future administrator. Secondly, I would like to thank Dr. Dennis Hurley, my university mentor, for his leadership expertise during this internship. A sincere and special thanks to my husband for dealing with the ups and downs surrounding the completion of my masters program.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Focus of the Study

Bullying in schools is a worldwide problem that can have negative consequences for the general school climate and for the right of students to learn in a safe environment without fear. Bullying can also have negative lifelong consequences- both for students who bully and for their victims. According to the National Association of School Psychologists, about one in seven school children- that's about five million kids- has either been a bully or a victim. The costs of this situation are enormous. Children who experience persistent bullying may become depressed or fearful. They may even lose interest in going to school.

Modern educationalists are saying that doesn't have to be the case. Hence, we now have a substantial body of information, much of it based upon rigorous research, detailing how schools can devise policies and procedures to reduce bullying and how victimized children can be helped to cope more effectively. The focus of this study is to raise awareness, counsel teachers and students for ways to deal with bullying behaviors, and to evaluate a school wide program targeted on alleviating some of the harmful effects that bullying can have on students.

Purpose of the Study

Various reports and studies have established that approximately 15% of students are initiators of bullying behavior (Olweus, 1993). Direct bullying seems to increase through the elementary years, peak in the middle school/ junior high school years, and

decline during the high school years. However, while direct physical assault seems to decrease with age, verbal abuse appears to remain constant. School size, racial composition, and school setting (rural, urban, or suburban) do not seem to be distinguishing factors in predicting the occurrence of bullying. Boys engage in bullying behavior and are victims of bullies more frequently than girls (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Nolin, Davies, & Chandler, 1995; Olweus, 1993; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Students who engage in bullying behaviors seem to have a need to feel powerful and in control. They appear to derive satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering on others, seem to have little empathy for their victims, and often defend their actions by saying that their victims provoked them in some way. Studies indicate that bullies often come from homes where physical punishment is used, where the children are taught to strike back physically as a way to handle problems, and where parental involvement and warmth are frequently lacking. Students who regularly display bullying behaviors are generally defiant or oppositional toward adults, antisocial, and apt to break school rules. In contrast to prevailing myths, bullies appear to have little anxiety and to possess strong self-esteem. There is little evidence to support the contention that they victimize others because they feel bad about themselves (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993).

Students who are victims of bullying are typically anxious, insecure, cautious, and suffer from low self-esteem, rarely defending themselves or retaliating when confronted by students who bully them. They may lack social skills and friends, and they are often socially isolated. Victims tend to be close to their parents and may have parents who can be described as overprotective. The major defining physical characteristic of victims is that they tend to be physically weaker than their peers—other physical characteristics

such as weight, dress, or wearing eyeglasses do not appear to be significant factors that can be correlated with victimization (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993).

Bullying is a problem that occurs in the social environment as a whole. The bullies' aggression occurs in social contexts in which teachers and parents are generally unaware of the extent of the problem and other children are either reluctant to get involved or simply do not know how to help (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995). Given this situation, effective interventions must involve the entire school community rather than focus on the perpetrators and victims alone. Smith and Sharp (1994) emphasize the need to develop whole-school bullying policies, implement curricular measures, improve the schoolground environment, and empower students through conflict resolution, peer counseling, and assertiveness training. Olweus (1993) details an approach that involves interventions at the school, class, and individual levels. It includes the following components:

- An initial questionnaire can be distributed to students and adults. The questionnaire helps both adults and students become aware of the extent of the problem, helps to justify intervention efforts, and serves as a benchmark to measure the impact of improvements in school climate once other intervention components are in place.
- A parental awareness campaign can be conducted during parent-teacher conference days, through parent newsletters, and at PTA meetings. The goal is to increase parental awareness of the problem, point out the importance of parental involvement for program success, and encourage parental support of program goals. Questionnaire results are publicized.

- Teachers can work with students at the class level to develop class rules against bullying. Many programs engage students in a series of formal role-playing exercises and related assignments that can teach those students directly involved in bullying alternative methods of interaction. These programs can also show other students how they can assist victims and how everyone can work together to create a school climate where bullying is not tolerated (Sjostrom & Stein, 1996).
- Other components of anti-bullying programs include individualized interventions with the bullies and victims, the implementation of cooperative learning activities to reduce social isolation, and increasing adult supervision at key times (e.g., recess or lunch). Schools that have implemented Olweus's program have reported a 50% reduction in bullying.

Definitions

Bullying-

Bullying is comprised of direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a victim. In addition to direct attacks, bullying may also be more indirect by causing a student to be socially isolated through intentional exclusion. While boys typically engage in direct bullying methods, girls who bully are more apt to utilize these more subtle indirect strategies, such as spreading rumors and enforcing social isolation (Ahmad & Smith, 1994; Smith & Sharp, 1994). Whether the bullying is direct or indirect, the key component of bullying is that the physical or psychological intimidation occurs repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993).

Bullying experts Tattum and Tattum (1992) proposed the following definition: bullying is the wilful, conscious desire to hurt another and put him/her under stress. Thus bullying was conceived as a desire. Anybody who wants to hurt somebody - and knows it - is then, by definition, a bully. The inadequacy of this formulation becomes evident when you ask people whether they ever feel like hurting somebody. In fact, at some time or other, almost everybody admits that they do. Of course many of those harboring ill will do not express their desires in action. They commonly think better of it. They do not bully. Yet this definition is a popular one, endorsed for example, by the Scottish Council for Educational Research that recommended that teachers should see bullying in this way.

Telecom, an organization that speaks out against bullying, defines bullying as a time when someone keeps doing or saying things to have power over another person. Some of the ways they bullies exercise this power are: calling the victims names, saying or writing nasty things about them, leaving them out of activities, not talking to them, threatening them, making them feel uncomfortable or scared, taking or damaging their things, hitting or kicking them, or making them do things they don't want to do.

N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15 (3)(b)(2) defines bullying in schools as any gesture or written, verbal or physical act that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by an actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or mental, physical, or sensory handicap, or by any other distinguishing characteristic, that takes place on school property, at any school sponsored function, or on a school bus that:

- a. a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of harming a student or damaging the student's property, or

placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his person or damage to his property or

- b. 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 school.

Anti-Bullying Program at Middle Township Elementary School-

Middle Township Middle School is in its first year of implementation of a school wide anti-bullying program. The district has a bullying complaint form and a cease and desist form in which the bully can report victimized behaviors. See appendix A for a copy of the program guidelines.

Cease and desist form-

This form is issued to a student who has been identified as a bully. An investigation is conducted prior to the issuance of the form to verify allegations that he/she bullied another student no less than three times during the school year. The bully is warned by administration to cease and desist from behaving in such an inappropriate manner. Failure to comply with the order will result in suspension from school for five days. A copy of the form is forwarded to the parents, and the bully is required to participate in mediation conferences.

Limitations of the Study

The implementation of any new program has to take into account some trials and errors. All of the schools in the district implementating this policy will need to meet to discuss its success. Some schools may encounter different effects from the program.

The students will not become aware of the program until school starts. This can pose a serious problem if the school intends to get the program started from day one. Teachers have limited knowledge of the program because it was just finalized and approved this summer through the Board of Education. The amount of training a teacher receives and the timing of when in-services are offered may affect the procedural aspects of the program.

The program calls for an intervention class for students who engage in bullying behavior. At this point, the guidance department is not aware of who will run the classes and the material that will be discussed in the intervention sessions.

Setting of the Study

The research site is Middle Township Middle School. The school is located in Cape May Court House, NJ. The middle school houses approximately 625 students. The district is made up of students from 10 different towns. The student population is extremely diverse in terms of socioeconomic status and ethnicity. The district strives to create and maintain a challenging, interesting, and student centered learning environment. A key component of its success has been the active staff, community, and parental support. Major initiatives within the curricular programs have been made possible because of broad based patronage.

The sample population involved in this study includes students, teachers, administrators, counselors and parents. Although this is a district wide program, the study will be looking at students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades at Middle Township Middle School. There are several different groups of students in the setting of this research: first, the bully, the person who initiates the teasing, taunting and inappropriate

behaviors; second, the victim, the person who receives the brunt of the bully's behavior, and also the bystander, the person who witnesses the victimization of another but is not directly involved in the bullying act. Teachers are another group which the study must take into consideration. They are the people who report bullying acts, talk with counselors and administration about what they have witnessed and recommend to students what course of action needs to be put in place. Administrators will also have to deal with students involved in the Anti-Bullying Program. After several steps in the proposed plan of action, a student must meet with an administrator to discuss consequences and to set up an appointment to meet with a counselor if conditions warrant for remediation. The counselor(s) involved in this study will participate in student remediation and bullying sessions. Students are also directed to the counselors when they wish to submit a bullying complaint form as well as cease and desist contract. Parents ultimately need to be a part of this study because their child may be the victim or a bully.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of this study is organized in the following way, The second chapter is a review of literature; the third chapter is a culmination of the data collected; the fourth chapter is data analysis, and the fifth chapter is a conclusion, which includes implications for further study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

It is estimated that 30 percent of American children are regularly involved in bullying, either as bullies, victims, or both (National Resource Center for Safe Schools [NRCSS], 2001). Approximately 15 percent of students are, “severely traumatized or distressed”, by encounters with bullies, and 8 percent report being victimized at school at least once a week (Hoover & Oliver, 1996; Skiba & Fontanini, 2000).

Despite these numbers, bullying behavior is rarely detected by teachers and is even less frequently taken seriously (NRCSS, 1999). Overwhelmingly, the research reflects a significant gap between educators’ perceptions and actual incidents of bullying at school. In one study, classroom teachers identified and intervened in only 4 percent of bullying incidents (Skiba & Fontanini, 2000). Part of the problem is that bullying is more likely to occur in places where adults are not. However, lack of understanding of the nature and severity of bullying behavior also contributes significantly to many adults’ inability or unwillingness to get involved (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 1998).

The consequences of bullying are far reaching, ranging from lower attendance and student achievement to an increased incidence of violence and juvenile crime. Children who bully are more likely to become violent adults, while victims of bullying often suffer from anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression well into adulthood (Banks, 2000; NRCSS,

1999). Even students who are not directly involved in bullying are affected. Children and teens who regularly witness bullying at school suffer from a less secure learning environment, the fear that the bully may target them next, and the knowledge that teachers and other adults are either unable or unwilling to control bullies' behavior (USDOE, 1998).

Review on the problem

According to Banks (2000), bullying behavior contributes to lower attendance rates, lower student achievement, low self-esteem, and depression, as well as higher rates of both juvenile and adult crime. Consider the following statistics:

- 160,000 students miss school every day due to fear of attack or intimidation by a bully (Fried & Fried, 1996); 7 percent of eighth-graders stay home at least once a month because of bullies (Banks, 2000) .
- Approximately 20 percent of students are scared throughout much of the school day (Garrity, et al., 1997).
- 14 percent of eighth- through 12th-graders and 22 percent of fourth- through eighth-graders surveyed reported that, "bullying diminished their ability to learn in school". (Hoover & Oliver, 1996, p. 10)

- 10 percent of students who drop out of school do so because of repeated bullying (Weinhold & Weinhold, 1998).
- “Bullies identified by age eight are six times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age 24 and five times more likely than non-bullies to end up with serious criminal records by the age of 30” (Maine Project Against Bullying, 2000); 60 percent of students characterized as bullies in grades 6-9 had at least one criminal conviction by age 24 (Banks, 2000).
- Roughly two-thirds of school shooters had, “felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or injured by others. ...a number of the teenagers had suffered sustained, severe bullying and harassment” (Bowman, 2001).

Untangling the Myths: What the Research Tells Us

Without question, the most effective means of addressing bullying is through comprehensive, school wide programs (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Garrity et al., 1997; Skiba & Fontanini, 2000). Although teachers, counselors, and parents may be able to deal with individual cases of bullying as they come up, it is

unlikely to have a significant impact on the incidence of bullying in the school (Banks, 2000).

For one thing, bullying often goes undetected by both teachers and parents (Skiba & Fontanini, 2000). As noted earlier, adults typically identify less than 10 percent of bullying incidents. In addition, many teachers and administrators fail to understand the dynamics of bullying. Without adequate training, some educators may actually endorse bullying behavior, either by sending students the message that bullying is “part of growing up,” or by simply ignoring the behavior (USDOE, 1998).

Perhaps the most important reason for developing a schoolwide anti-bullying program, however, is to engage and empower “the silent majority”, that large percentage of students who regularly witness bullying at school but don’t know what they can do to help (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Programs that teach students to recognize and intervene in bullying have been found to have the greatest impact on curbing incidents of bullying and harassment at school (Rigby, 1995).

School wide anti-bullying programs can take many shapes. Whether the school plans to implement a bullying prevention curriculum, develop an anti-bullying task force, or integrate anti-bullying efforts into established violence prevention programs, there are seven important steps to take:

1. Assess your school's needs and goals.

During the initial phases of program development, survey students, teachers, and parents about the occurrence of bullying in the school (USDOE, 1998). This will not only provide information about where, when, and between whom bullying occurs at your school, but will also allow you to examine any disparities between student, teacher, and parent perceptions (Saufler, n.d.). You will then need to spend time discussing which of the issues identified in the survey are most urgent and how best to address them, given available staff, funding, resources, and time (American Federation of Teachers, 2000).

2. Develop an anti-bullying policy.

Using the findings of the needs assessment to guide discussion, work with parents, students, administrators, teachers, and other school staff to develop a comprehensive, school wide policy on bullying (Hoover & Oliver, 1996). The policy should include a clear definition of bullying and a description of how the school will respond to bullying incidents (Rigby, 1995), as well as a discussion of program philosophy and goals.

3. Provide training for teachers, administrators, and other school staff.

Set aside time during the school year to share and discuss information about bullying with all school employees (USDOE, 1998). If possible, make an effort to include staff members who are likely to be present in places bullying tends to occur: playground monitors, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodial staff, and so forth. Training should include definitions of bullying, indicators of bullying

behavior, characteristics of bullies and victims, ways to integrate anti-bullying material into curriculum, and strategies for addressing bullying behavior. Quality training and opportunities for discussion are essential if all staff are to buy in to anti-bullying policies and programs.

4. Involve parents.

If possible, get parents involved in both program planning and implementation (USDOE, 1998). Invite them to provide information for program assessments; share survey results with them; offer them training and information, and keep them abreast of program developments. Encourage parents to contact teachers or administrators if they suspect that a child is bullying or being bullied (Fried & Fried, 1996).

5. Identify resources for bullies, victims, and families.

Efforts to address bullying behavior are not over when the bully is caught and disciplined. Students who bully repeatedly may benefit from anger management classes or individual counseling, while students who have been victimized may require support in dealing with anxiety and depression (Fried & Fried, 1996). Because many children who bully or are victimized, experience bullying at home, it may be necessary to develop intervention strategies involving the whole family (Fried & Fried, 1996; Hoover & Oliver, 1996). Anti-bullying programs should clearly identify resources for students and families that are available both at school and in the community.

6. Provide increased supervision in areas where bullying tends to occur.

Identify places on school grounds where bullying is more likely to occur and work with the school staff to ensure there is adequate adult supervision in those areas. Playgrounds, bus stops, hallways, and school bathrooms often provide easy opportunities for bullies to isolate and intimidate their victims (NRCSS, 1999; USDOE, 1998).

7. Integrate anti-bullying themes and activities into curriculum.

Classroom teachers play a central role in the way that bullying policies and programs are presented and delivered to students. Curricula should include definitions of bullying, discussions of how bullying affects everyone, ways students can help others, and assertiveness training (Fried & Fried, 1996; Kreidler, 1996). Depending on the age of the students, you may want to provide students opportunities to role-play, and/or involve students in strategizing specific ways bullying can be addressed in their school (Pirozzi, 2001). Most important, though, bullying curriculum should emphasize to students the difference between tattling and telling on someone, and encourage them to report to adults any situation in which a peer is being bullied or abused.

School wide Efforts to Prevent Bullying

Myths about bullying behavior abound. It is not uncommon to hear that bullying is just a “normal” part of childhood, that children who bully simply suffer from low self-esteem, and that victims really ought to figure out how to stand up for themselves. Children and adults both frequently accuse victims of

bringing the bullying on themselves—either by provoking the bullies or by making themselves look weak and defenseless (Banks, 2000).

The first step in untangling these myths is to define exactly what bullying is and how it differs from “normal” childhood conflicts. Perhaps the most important distinctions have to do with duration, power, and intent to harm (Greene, 2001). Bullying, unlike isolated conflicts between individuals, occurs when a student or group of students targets an individual repeatedly over time, using physical or psychological aggression to dominate the victim (Hoover & Oliver, 1996; Rigby, 1995; USDOE, 1998). The repeated incidents function to create and enforce an imbalance of power between bully and victim.

Among middle and high school students, bullying behavior most frequently involves teasing and social exclusion, but may also include physical violence, threats, theft, sexual and racial harassment, public humiliation, and destruction of the targeted student’s property. Bullying behavior in elementary grades is more likely than in older grades to involve physical aggression, but is characterized by teasing, intimidation, and social exclusion as well (Banks, 2000).

Identifying students who bully others

When working to determine if one student is bullying another, it is important to remember that a key element of bullying behavior is an imbalance or abuse of power. Conflicts between students of roughly the same social status or who are equally capable of defending themselves are not typically bullying

situations. Signs that may be helpful in identifying a student who bullies others include:

- The student regularly engages in hurtful teasing, name calling, or intimidation of others, particularly those who are smaller or less able to defend themselves. The taunting and harassment is not two-way and appears to reinforce an imbalance of status or power (Olweus, 1993).
- The student may believe that he or she is superior to other students or blame others for being smaller, physically weaker, or different; students who bully, “may brag about their actual or imagined superiority over other students” (Olweus, 1993, p. 59).
- The student frequently fights with others as a way to assert dominance; students who bully often pick fights with students they believe to be weaker, and who do not want to be involved in the conflict (Olweus, 1993). Students who bully may also, “induce some of their followers to do the ‘dirty work’ while they themselves keep in the background” (Olweus, 1993, p. 58).

- Students who bully tend to have little empathy, “derive satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering,” and, “seem to desire power and control” (NRCSS, 1999).

Despite popular perceptions of bullies, students who bully generally have average to high self-esteem, may be popular with both teachers and classmates, and may also do well in school (Olweus, 1993; NRCSS, 1999).

Identifying children who are being bullied

Again, it’s important to note that primary indicators of bullying behavior include duration, power, and intent to harm—there is a difference between children who are occasionally teased by friends and those who are being harassed and intimidated. Depending on the situation, some or all of the following signs may help identify a student who is being bullied.

- Students who are bullied are frequently, “teased in a nasty way, called names (may also have a derogatory nickname), taunted, belittled, ridiculed, intimidated, degraded, threatened, given orders, dominated, [or] subdued” (Olweus, 1993, p. 54).
- A student who regularly has bruises, torn clothing, or injuries that can’t be easily explained, or who often has his or her belongings taken or damaged, may be being bullied (Olweus, 1993).

- Students who are bullied often have few or no close friends at school (NRCSS, 1999), and are frequently socially isolated (Banks, 2000). Further, they may frequently be chosen last for teams or other group activities (Olweus, 1993).
- A student who is being bullied is often less assertive, or lacks the skills necessary to respond to other students' teasing and harassment (NRCSS, 1999); he or she may also appear weak or easily dominated (Banks, 2000; Kreidler, 1996; NRCSS, 1999).
- Students who are bullied repeatedly may also “try to stay close to the teacher or other adults during breaks,” avoid restrooms and other isolated areas, and/or make excuses to stay home from school as much as possible (Olweus, 1993, p. 55).

In general, children who are bullied tend to have lower self-esteem and self-confidence (Kriedler, 1996). They may perceive themselves negatively (particularly after repeated harassment and victimization), and shy away from confrontation and conflict—traits that other students may pick up on (Kreidler, 1996; Olweus, 1993). As a result of the bullying, they may often, “appear distressed, unhappy, depressed, [and] tearful,” and their performance and interest in school may begin to deteriorate as well (Olweus, 1993, p. 55).

That said, there is no hard evidence to show that children who are targeted by bullies share certain physical characteristics such as wearing glasses or being overweight (NRCSS, 1999). Although students themselves often identify specific physical and social factors as contributing to victimization, the research does not appear to support this. According to Hoover and Oliver (1996), “It is not clear ... that chronic scapegoats are objectively different from students not victimized” (p. 17).

Addressing Bullying One-On-One:

What Parents, Teachers, and Counselors Can Do

Keeping in mind that most incidents of bullying go unnoticed by adults, parents and educators may need to take an active role in identifying bullying behavior and working with students to address it. Although there is no substitute for a school wide program, there are some specific things that parents and educators can do to help students one-on-one as problems with bullying arise.

Probably the most important thing adults can do is to listen (NRCSS, 1999). Too often, children and young adults are told to “toughen up” or “ignore it” when they attempt to talk about bullying encounters at school. This kind of response makes students who are already socially isolated feel even more alone and helpless to prevent the harassment. It also sends the message that bullying is not taken seriously and may even be their fault (USDOE, 1998).

Described below are a number of strategies available to adults concerned about bullying behavior. Some tips are more appropriate to classroom teachers, while some may be more applicable to parents, counselors, or other school staff.

- Initiate conversations with students about bullying.

Don't wait for them to bring it up, or assume that because you haven't heard about it, that it's not happening. The vast majority of bullying behavior is never detected by adults, and many students are either too embarrassed or scared to talk about it. Conversations about specific bullying incidents may be held with individual students in private, or the subject can be dealt with more generally in whole-class discussions (Fried & Fried, 1996).

- Be prepared to intervene.

If you observe that a student is being bullied, step in immediately (USDOE, 1998). In situations in which bullying incidents are reported to you, you may want to work with the victim first to determine the best way to get involved.

- Don't expect students to solve things themselves.

Peer mediation does not work in bullying situations and should be avoided. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the, "difference in power between bullies and victims may cause victims to feel further victimized by the process or believe that they are somehow at fault" (USDOE, 1998, p. 7).

- Encourage students to report incidents of bullying.

Especially with younger students, discuss the difference between simply telling on someone and stepping in to help another person (Fried & Fried, 1996; Kreidler, 1996).

- Express strong disapproval of bullying when it occurs or comes up in conversation.

Be sure students know that you don't condone any kind of harassment or mistreatment of others, whether it be teasing, social exclusion, or physical violence (Kreidler, 1996). As much as possible, reassure students that your classroom is a safe and supportive place (USDOE, 1998).

- Work with students on developing assertiveness and conflict resolution skills.

This is an important step in helping both students who are victimized and students who witness bullying learn ways to diffuse the situation. Adults should avoid teaching children to fight back, however, or to respond to violence in kind (USDOE, 1998). Fighting back only escalates the problem and reinforces the belief that weaker and noncombative students somehow deserve to be bullied.

- Focus on developing empathy and respect for others.

Create opportunities for students to learn to work together, such as through assignments that require sharing and collaboration (Hoover & Oliver, 1996; Rigby, 1995). Praise students, especially those who tend to bully

others, for acts of kindness and respect (Kreidler, 1996; USDOE, 1998).

Although focusing on empathy alone is unlikely to lead to significant change, it demonstrates to students that everyone is valued and respected in your classroom.

- Avoid physical forms of discipline, such as spanking.

Hitting children when they misbehave simply reinforces the belief that, “might makes right”, and that violence and intimidation are appropriate ways to get what you want (Fried & Fried, 1996). Whenever possible, model nonviolent means of resolving conflicts.

- Keep a log of bullying incidents.

Record all incidents of bullying, including who was involved, where it occurred, how often, and what strategies you used to address it (Kreidler, 1996). Over time, the log will allow you to identify any patterns in bullying behavior, as well as what kinds of interventions worked best to stop it.

- Deal with bullying incidents consistently and in a manner appropriate to the situation.

If your school does not already have a policy in place for dealing with bullying, write a policy specific to your classroom (Hoover & Oliver, 1996; Kreidler, 1996). In general, discipline policies concerning bullying should include an immediate response to the behavior, follow-up, and feedback (USDOE, 1998). Depending on the severity of the bullying,

sanctions such as suspension may be appropriate (Rigby, 1995).

Remember that you may not be able to monitor students' progress very easily, as most bullying occurs outside the view of teachers, parents, and other adults.

Conclusion

Given the serious effects bullying behavior has on both students and schools, we can't afford to simply dismiss it as a "normal" or inevitable part of childhood. There is nothing "normal" about ongoing incidents of harassment, violence, and intimidation. Bullying not only leads to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem in students who are targeted, but also causes other students to feel unsafe at school and significantly interferes with learning. Long-term effects of bullying on students who bully, such as aggressive behavior continuing into adulthood, cannot be ignored either (Schwarzbeck, 1998). Students of all ages deserve to feel safe and supported at school (USDOE, 1998).

Taking bullying behavior seriously is an important step in working toward safe and effective schools. Through training, collaboration, and carefully designed programs, schools can ensure they are a place where students feel welcome, included, and ready to learn.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Introduction

From the large amount of research that has been done on bullying in many parts of the world, especially over the past ten years, it is evident that bullying behavior between students occurs to some degree in all schools and that bullying, as one type of violent behavior in schools, constitutes a serious problem for those who are the victims. It's harmfulness in terms of the adverse effects on the mental and physical health of children has been clearly demonstrated.

General Description of the Research design

The research is generated from student, teacher, and parent surveys. The responses in the survey lead the way to developing programs and bullying assemblies in our school and community. With the implementation of our new district policy on bullying, students have participated in informational sessions to address the rules that guide the anti-bullying policy. Part of my research is informal observations of student responses in regards to the assemblies. Included in the school bullying policy are several reporting forms for students to complete when they witness incidents of bullying or are actually part of them themselves. The research design uses the complaint forms and the cease and desist orders to generate the effectiveness of guidance counselors dealing with the problems head on. Research is also generated from informal discussions with counselors and students who have made bullying reports.

Development and Design of the Research Instrumentation

I thought it was crucial to have data feedback from not only students, but also parents and teachers. The research instrumentation consists of three surveys. The first survey is an anonymous student safety survey. I wanted to understand student perception of safety within our school building. The survey asks questions about do you feel safe in school, have you ever been bullied or harassed, have you ever witnessed a bullying incident, and do you feel bullies are properly punished? Along with the quantitative statistics generated from the yes or no questions, I was also able to illicit comments about the safety concerns in our school. Sample questions include;

Where do find that bullying incidents occur the most frequently?

What kinds of consequences do you feel are the most appropriate for dealing with kids who are bullies?

Whom do you tell about incidents you see in regards to bullying?

The second survey entitled, Handling Bullying: A staff Questionnaire helped me to understand a teacher's perspective. Teachers have alternative ways of dealing with incidents of bullying in a school. To some extent, what is done depends upon the circumstances in which the bullying takes place and the severity of the bullying. In the survey, teachers were ask to read the flowing scenario-

A student is being repeatedly teased and called unpleasant names by another, more powerful, student, who has successfully persuaded other students to avoid the targeted person as much as possible. As a result, the victim of this behavior is feeling angry, miserable and often isolated.

After teachers read the scenario, I asked them to answer questions about what they would probably do if the students were in their class and they noticed what was going on. I informed them that there are no right or wrong answers. After the survey was completed, the teachers were able to discuss and share their responses.

I grouped the likert results into five clusters; ascribes responsibility to the victim, ascribes responsibility to the bully, ignores the bullying, becomes a problem solver, or uses a smoothing approach.

The final survey documentation I used was a parent response survey. The survey was used to identify target concern areas. I informed the parents that the survey is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. Their name will not be on this survey. Nobody will know the answers belong to them. They will be counted with the answers of other parents to help us better understand how bullying, harassment and other forms of violence affect students in our schools and community. Better yet, it will give us data on which a coordinating committee can base recommended programs to the Middle Township School Board and the Middle Township Community to help reduce bullying, harassment and violence, and to help victims of such behavior.

Description of Sampling and Sampling Techniques

This study was completed in the Middle Township Middle School located in Cape May Court House in order to provide students and their parents/guardians with the rules of the district regarding student conduct and the policy of bullying in order to enhance a safe learning environment. All students in the district were informed of the new Anti-Bullying procedures. Teachers were also key participants in this study because they

needed to be aware of how bullying situations were handled and the consequences of bullying.

Students were surveyed by counselors and administrators in regards to bullying. The material culture data was reviewed from cease and desist forms and bullying complaint forms on file in the guidance department. Observation techniques were used as an additional means of data collection to analyze student behaviors in regards to bullying.

Description of the Data Collection Approach

My data was collected when I presented the bullying seminars in each individual homeroom in my school. At the conclusion of my assembly, I distributed the student surveys and waited until students were finished and collected them. In regards to the collection of survey documentation from the teachers in my building; I passed them out and explained the scoring at one of our faculty meetings. I then asked the teachers to return them in my school mailbox. The parent surveys were mailed to a random sampling of parents in the district. They were returned to the school in self-addressed envelopes or the students brought them in for their parents.

I meet with John and Linda, the school counselors, on a weekly basis to discuss updated bullying reports and student mediations. My open communication with them has allowed me to acquire data in a valuable and informal fashion.

Description of the Data Analysis Plan

In the teacher survey, I used a likert scale to help code the data. The teachers were kind enough to score their own results and compile the information in a chart I had

given to them. The scores reflected different approaches to addressing bullying issues- they included: the teacher ascribes responsibility to the victim, ascribes responsibility to the bully, ignores the bullying, becomes a problem solver, or uses a smoothing approach.

The parent surveys collected were distributed to the Home School Association. They have volunteered to analyze the results and make a list of parental areas of concern. Those areas are questions in which 55% or more of the parents favored a particular response.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

There was a definitive need for an anti-bullying policy in all schools. Bullying can be found in every school in the country. It was all too often part of the way young people interact in society. Every school must recognize its extent and impact and take steps to stop it from happening. When bullying was ignored or downplayed, pupils will suffer ongoing torment and harassment. It can cause life long damage to victims. A school's failure to deal with bullying endangers the safety of all its pupils by allowing a hostile environment to interfere with learning. There was clear, unambiguous evidence that school action can dramatically reduce the incidence of bullying.

My school district preceding the implementation of the bullying action plan has experienced very surprising and positive results in and out of the classroom. In several of the classrooms where bullying assemblies took place, the bullies became positive leaders within their peer group. It was found that the classroom curriculum spurred moral and social development of a set of students who previously went unnoticed, for the most part. These children were not academic or athletic stars, but suddenly they found something they were good at and an arena where they could receive attention. They would often spend time thinking up creative and fair solutions to conflicts and dilemmas in their peer group.

In response to the grand tour question: How has the anti-bullying program changed the school climate for the betterment of the teachers, students and administration? Primarily, it was important for teachers to have an understanding of how to deal with bullying behaviors. Through a seminar developed, teachers were given

hands on training to deal with ways to address bullying behaviors. A survey was devised that raised teacher's awareness to bullying.

The following scenario was given to teachers to summarize their particular way of dealing with bullying:

A student was being repeatedly teased and called unpleasant names by another, more powerful student, who has successfully persuaded other students to avoid the targeted person as much as possible. As a result, the victim of this behavior is feeling angry, miserable, and often isolated. What would you probably do if the students were in your class and you had noticed what was going on? There are no right or wrong answers. The scores on the subtest were intended to reflect different approaches to addressing bullying issues.

A- Ascribing responsibility to the victim.- High scores tend to see the remedy to bullying as lying principally with the victim who needs to develop the capacity to resist being bullied or in some way prevent it from happening.

B- Ascribing responsibility to the bully.- High scorers want to blame the bullies and treat them in an uncompromising and tough manner so as to deter their behavior.

C- Ignoring bullying.- High scorers tend to ignore or belittle the issue of bullying and feel that it is generally not their responsibility.

D- Problem Solving.- High scorers are not interested in blame, but rather in reaching a constructive outcome for both the bully and the victim.

E- **Smoothing approach.**- High scorers generally feel that bullying need not be taken very seriously and that children can be best prevented from bullying others by reducing their opportunities and/or their motivation to do so.

Results from survey

Table 1.0

Sample size 72 teachers

A- Responsibility to Victim	B- Responsibility to bully	C- Ignoring bullying	D- Problem Solving	E- Smoothing Approach
4- 5.5%	15- 20.8%	12-16.6%	29- 40.2%	12- 16.6%

After gathering this information, it can be concluded that the majority of the teachers were in favor of the problem solving approach. This seemed to be the most effective way in dealing with bullying behaviors. From these results, a group of peer leaders was used to help in the participation of conflict resolution sessions with the bully and the victim. How has the school climate changed for the betterment of the students? Evidence shows a positive interaction with peer mentors and bullying incident participants. A plan was devised through the Guidance Department that trained peer leaders to aid in conflict resolution. Teachers sent down bullying incident forms and the peer leaders meet with the students involved to reach a constructive outcome for both the bully and the victim. Listed below are several quotes from peer leaders in response to their participation in the peer mentoring sessions.

Gary-“ I was able to make a difference in the lives of students.”

Chelsea- “It felt good that students came to me to help solve their bullying issues.”

Sami- “The students most of the time respected my approach to try to solve their conflicts.”

The administration was seeing a significantly lesser number of discipline referrals in their office in regards to bullying incidents. The chain of command uses the expertise of the guidance department and the group of peer mediators before using the administration for bullying incidents. However, in extreme circumstances, bullying referrals have been directly forwarded to the administration.

The second grand tour question- To what extent does bullying take place in our school? Students were surveyed to gather quantitative data in regards to their opinions about the prevalence of bullying in our school. One specific question from the survey was highlighted in the proceeding chart- How often do other children bully you?

There was a total of 224 surveys returned for scoring.

Sample- Students in 6,7, and 8 grade at Middle Township Middle School.

The categories included:

Every day

Once or twice per week

Once or twice per month

Once or twice per year

Never

Every day	Once or twice per week	Once or twice per month	Once or twice per year	Never
17-7.5%	30-13.3%	50-22.3%	82-36.6%	45-20%

Schools that have implemented anti-bullying programs have reported a 50 percent reduction in bullying, according to Olweus (Sherman 199). In conclusion, to these results, it was evident that school wide bullying policies need to include curricular measures such as conflict resolution and assertiveness training, peer and professional counseling, and more adult supervision. A limitation to these results is that the student survey took place in the middle of the introduction to the anti- bullying policy. These results can work as a guide to further study in reducing bullying incidents.

What can be done to help teachers and students tackle the problem of bullying? Strategies for teachers should include: discussing with students the harm bullying can cause as well as strategies to reduce it; developing a classroom action plan to ensure that students know what to do when they observe a bully-victim confrontation; and teaching cooperation by assigning projects that require collaboration. Strategies for students should include; seeking immediate help from an adult; speaking up and offering support to the victim with kindness or condolence; expressing disapproval of bullying by not joining in the laughter, teasing, or spreading of rumors or gossip; and reporting bullying/victimization incidents to school personnel.

From this standpoint, several of the above strategies have been implemented, but further and necessary professional development needs to be set up for teachers to continue their quest for knowledge in dealing with the many facets of bullying.

Students needed to feel comfortable with being able to report incidents and feel confident that action will be taken to help correct the matter. Here was where there was a direct link between teachers, administration, and the students. All members must be willing to do their part, in order for the cycle to be effective.

Lastly, in research findings, is an overall opinion of the new anti-bullying program and student's opinions about the problems they have encountered.

Listed below are some problems students said they encountered with the new bullying action plan:

1-) Students were presented the plan during their homeroom classes. Therefore, the effort to reach the whole school took several weeks. Some students were aware of the policy before others even had a chance to attend the homeroom seminar. The initial rationale was to reach smaller numbers of students, therefore maximizing policy understanding. The school as a whole about the new approach was not addressed, in fear the size of the audience would not lend to intimate questioning and discussion. This was a concern that can be readdressed next year, when the new group of sixth graders enters the building.

2-) Several students commented that teachers dealt with the policy in different ways. Continued professional growth will hopefully correct the discrepancies among teachers.

According to the sub question, what problems do non-conforming student encounter, research has shown that teacher and administration action must be committed in response to bullying when it happens. Immediate intervention was crucial and clear procedures must take place when a case of bullying is discovered.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

Introduction

Many children and adults seriously underestimate bullying and the harm that it caused other students. Educators, parents, and children concerned with violence prevention must also be concerned with the phenomenon of bullying and its link to other violent behavior.

Teachers have noted that several measures and effective techniques can be used to control bullying behavior. Absolute structure in a classroom was crucial. Routines and procedures help maintain a stable and safe environment. The bullying behavior tends to subside when the bully was given very little attention. A lot of attention or negative attention tends to make the bully worse. The bully was extremely opportunist; he will look for every opportunity to seize power in the classroom. It was very important to frequently tell students that open communication was essential. The reason was twofold: First, overall school supervision was necessary. The bully must be watched closely in and out of the classroom. Second, it prevents parents from believing that one teacher was singling out their child.

The implementation of a comprehensive school wide approach spells out the penalties in advance. Students and the school community get the opportunity to adopt mottos and establish proper behaviors. The plan has helped to educate students, parents, and staff about policies and penalties. The reporting forms include a way for students to report incidents without the fear of retaliation. Through the plan, teachers will continue to look for warning signs, talk with other teachers and staff, act immediately, be good

listeners, send a clear messages, provide the option of counseling, and most importantly help students accept their differences.

The school bullying policy helps to fulfill a promise to deal with bullying behaviors. A new law was passed by the state lawmakers and signed in on September 6, 2003. It requires school districts to institute specific policies prohibiting harassment, intimidation or bullying on school property, at school-sponsored functions or on school buses. According to the law, certain components must be addressed; a statement prohibiting bullying, a definition of bullying, and a procedure for reporting it, investigating it and responding to it. Our district wide plan covers all the above components and adds in a crucial piece in aiding the productiveness of its success- that's continued teacher professional development to bring permanent help in reducing the epidemic of bullying in our schools.

The comprehensive action plan has helped accomplish several of the following aspects:

- 1-the creation of a school wide effort to encourage children to disclose and discuss incidences of bullying behavior.
- 2- a raised level of awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behavior with school personnel, teachers, pupils, and parents/guardians.
- 3- a criteria of procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behavior
- 4- a series of steps for investigating and dealing with bullying behavior
- 5- the use of peer leadership programs to support those affected by bullying behavior and for those involved in the bullying.

The school district formally accepted the following as principals to help aid in intervention:

- Awareness and warm, positive involvement of adults (e.g., teachers, principals, school counselors, parents);
- The ability to set and stick to firm limits as to what behavior is unacceptable (i.e., Bullying is not accepted in our school);
- The consistency to apply non-hostile, nonphysical negative consequences for rule violation and unacceptable behavior; and encourage adults to act as authorities and positive role models in students' academic learning and social relationships in school

The Bullying Prevention Program was shown to result in:

- a substantial reduction in boys' and girls' reports of bullying and victimization;
- a significant reduction in students' reports of general antisocial behavior such as vandalism, fighting, theft and truancy; and
- significant improvements in the "social climate" of the class, as reflected in students' reports of improved order and discipline, more positive social relationships, and a more positive attitude toward schoolwork and school.

Implications of the study on Leadership Skills/Organizational Change

This study has provided an overall school wide vision and mission to address the implications of bullying. Teachers worked together under the guidance of the district policy guidelines, the use of teacher informational sessions and the use of resources to implement our goal.

Leadership was witnessed as a substantial positive element in the use of professional development as part of school improvement. Staff members were consistently recognized for their efforts to promote a safe school environment using the bullying intervention strategies.

The study aided in the knowledge and understanding of operational procedures at the school and district level. The issues and relevance of school safety and security have become a top priority. The use of guidance counselors, teachers, parents, and students has proven to be highly valuable in the process of involving stakeholders in the management process of maintaining a safe school environment. In regards to the performance aspect of ISLLC standard three: A school administrator was an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, and efficient learning environment, the program has effectively identified potential problems and opportunities and confronted and/or resolved them in a timely manner. Parents and community leaders to help solve school problems and achieve goals have attended workshops.

Further Study

In order to evaluate the success of a school wide bullying policy, schools must monitor the effectiveness of the program. Each year marks a new beginning for teachers in meeting and dealing with students. It was imperative that teachers and staff members continue to address the issue of bullying year after year by using the resources available. It was not safe to assume that once teachers are in-serviced on bullying intervention strategies, that they know it all.

There must be continued use of professional development for teachers, parents, counselors, and students to ensure the issue will not go unnoticed.

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Appendix A
Staff Bullying Questionnaire

Handling bullying: a staff questionnaire

Teachers have alternative ways of dealing with incidents of bullying in a school.

To some extent, what is done depends upon the circumstances in which the bullying takes place and the severity of the bullying.

In answering the questions below, think of an incident that might come to your attention of medium level intensity bullying.

A student is being repeatedly teased and called unpleasant names by another, more powerful, student, who has successfully persuaded other students to avoid the targeted person as much as possible. As a result, the victim of this behavior is feeling angry, miserable and often isolated.

What would **you probably do** if the students were in your class and you had noticed what was going on? There are no right or wrong answers. Afterwards, you might like to discuss your answers among yourselves.

Circle the answer closest to what you think.

1. I would advise the victim to act assertively and stand up to the bully				
I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
2. I would tell the bully to cut it out				
I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
3. I would turn a blind eye to it				
I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
4. I would help the bully and the victim resolve their differences				
I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not

5. I would treat the matter lightly.

I definitely
would

I probably
would

I'm unsure

I probably
would not

I definitely
would not

6. I would advise the victim to stay away from the bully as much as possible

I definitely
would

I probably
would

I'm unsure

I probably
would not

I definitely
would not

7. I would make sure that the bully was suitably punished

I definitely
would

I probably
would

I'm unsure

I probably
would not

I definitely
would not

8. I would not interfere

I definitely
would

I probably
would

I'm unsure

I probably
would not

I definitely
would not

9. I would convene a meeting of students, including the bully, tell them what was happening, and ask them to suggest ways in which they could help improve the situation.

I definitely
would

I probably
would

I'm unsure

I probably
would not

I definitely
would not

10. I would seek to help the bully to achieve greater self-esteem so that he or she would no longer want to bully anyone

I definitely
would

I probably
would

I'm unsure

I probably
would not

I definitely
would not

11. I would encourage the victim to make more friends so that he or she would not be picked on so much

I definitely
would

I probably
would

I'm unsure

I probably
would not

I definitely
would not

12. I would make it clear to the bully that his or her behavior would not be tolerated any longer

I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
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13. I would leave it for somebody else to sort out.

I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
--------------------	------------------	------------	----------------------	------------------------

14. I would share my concern with the bully about what had happened to the victim and seek to get the bully to behave in a more caring and responsible manner.

I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
--------------------	------------------	------------	----------------------	------------------------

15. I would separate the bully from the victim so that there was less chance of bullying taking place.

I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
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16. I would suggest that the victim not show that he/she was bothered by what was happening.

I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
--------------------	------------------	------------	----------------------	------------------------

17. I would contact the parent(s) of the bully and insist that their child's bullying behavior must stop,

I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
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18 I would let them sort it out themselves

I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
--------------------	------------------	------------	----------------------	------------------------

19. I would discuss with the bully options from which he or she could choose to remedy the situation.

I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
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20. I would find the bully something more interesting to do.

I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
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Now look at the scoring key

Handling bullying questionnaire-scoring key

Score your responses as follows and enter the scores against the question numbers

Definitely would	5
Probably would	4
I'm unsure	3
Probably would not	2
Definitely would not	1

Enter results below and add:

<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>
1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5.....
6.....	7.....	8.....	9.....	10.....
11.....	12.....	13.....	14.....	15.....
16.....	17.....	18.....	19.....	20.....
Totals	---	---	---	---

In discussing the results, establish the range of scores for each sub-test, between 5 and 20. Then discuss why some of you score relatively high and some relatively low on the measures.

Scores on the sub-test are intended to reflect different approaches to addressing bullying issues.

- A. **Ascribing responsibility to the victim.** High scorers tend to see the remedy to bullying as lying principally with the victim who needs to develop the capacity to resist being bullied or in some way prevent it from happening.
- B. **Ascribing responsibility to the bully.** High scorers want to blame the bullies and treat them in an uncompromising and tough manner so as to deter their behavior
- C. **Ignoring bullying.** High scorers tend to ignore or belittle the issue of bullying and feel that it is generally not their responsibility.
- D. **Problem solving.** High scorers are not interested in blame, but rather in reaching a constructive outcome for both the bully and the victim
- E. **Smoothing approach.** High scorers generally feel that bullying need not be taken very seriously and that children can be best prevented from bullying others by reducing their opportunities and/or their motivation to do so.

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Appendix B

Anonymous Student Safety Survey

Anonymous Student Safety Survey

About You

1. I am a : (please circle) female male
2. I am in the _____ grade.

Feeling safe at school

1. How often do other children bully you? (physically attack, threaten, pick on you, and/or mistreat you- are some examples) Circle one only:

Every day

Once or twice per week

Once or twice per month

Once or twice per year

Never

Biographical Data

Name	Toni Anne Conoshenti-Johnson
High School	Union Catholic Regional High School Scotch Plains, NJ
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Arts Elementary Education University of Scranton Scranton, PA
Graduate	Master of Arts School Administration Rowan University Glassboro, NJ
Present Occupation	Reading and Language Arts Teacher Middle Township Middle School Cape May Court House, NJ

