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A STUDY OF RELATIONAL AGGRESSION AMONG MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS

by
Susanne R. Wooton

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Masters of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
2004

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved May 2004
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ABSTRACT

Susanne R. Wooton
A Study of Relational Aggression among Middle School Girls
2003-04
Dr. Ronald Capasso
School Administration

This study was designed to evaluate the degree of bullying in the middle grades and to design an effective anti-bullying program using the input of the female students. The participants were selected on a volunteer basis from a pool of 7th and 8th grade female students. In addition to two surveys, that were designed to evaluate the extent of bullying in the school and the knowledge that the students gained from the study, the students participated in several small group meetings where they discussed the topic of bullying and ways to eliminate it. Students demonstrated an increased knowledge on the topic of bullying by adding the term relational or covert aggression to their understanding. A program that continues a small group discussion to remove the problem of bullying among this age group was formulated. A discussion on how to proceed with this program and its lasting effects is discussed.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Susanne R. Wooton

A Study of Relational Aggression among Middle School Girls

2003-04

Dr. Ronald Capasso

School Administration

This is a study of middle school females on the issue of bullying that is designed to evaluate the extent of bullying and create an effective anti-bullying program. Volunteers were surveyed on their knowledge and participated in small group discussions. This study increased the knowledge of the participants and created the framework for an effective program that allows girls to discuss the issue.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Focus of the study

The focus of this study is to address the concerns of bullying among the seventh and eighth grade girls at Alloway Township School by developing an anti-bullying program. This program will create study groups where the female students and female teachers will discuss the issue of bullying and ways to overcome this problem.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to develop a program that addresses the problem of bullying among girls in the seventh and eighth grades. This study will result in an on-going forum for girls and teachers to discuss the causes and effects of bullying and to develop strategies to resolve conflicts. Such a program that provides a controlled environment that is free from anger and conflict in the seventh and eighth grade where girls and teachers to articulate their concerns with bullying.

Definitions:

Bullying: Physical and/or psychological abuse on an individual by another individual or group of individuals.

Bully: Perpetrator of action (student who initiates the acts of aggression)

Target: Recipient of action (student who is on the receiving end of the acts of aggression)

Exclusion: The act of prohibiting an individual from his/her peers' activities

Overt aggression: Physical acts of hostility

Covert aggression: Nonphysical acts of hostility such as name calling, exclusion, teasing.

Social or relational aggression: Another name for covert aggression used by some researchers.

School violence: Acts of hostility that occur within the school building.

Limitations of the study:

This program cannot be replicated elsewhere because it was specifically designed to meet the needs of the seventh and eighth grade female population at Alloway Township School. While other schools may face similar types of bullying, each situation is still unique to the school community of which it is a part. The findings may not be able to be used with any group other than the group for which it was designed, because the study was created to address the problems of this specific site.

Setting of the study:

Alloway Township School District is a small rural district set in the heart of Salem County, NJ. The school district has a population of 490 students and serves students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The district consists of one school building that houses the administration offices and all of the students. Because there are not enough students at Alloway to warrant a high school at the conclusion of eighth grade, the students attend high school at Woodstown/Pilesgrove Regional High School in Woodstown, NJ, a town about three miles from Alloway.

Alloway is an elementary school district that offers a variety of programs to all of its students. Some programs of note are the enriched learning program (ELP); advanced math

courses in the seventh and eighth grades; music program that consists of concert band, marching band, and chorus; art programs; and a Spanish program that offers an advanced course for seventh and eighth grade students. Qualified eighth grade students are also able to attend an Introductory to Physical Science class at Woodstown High School.

In addition to offering many academic opportunities to the students, technology in Alloway School is kept current. The school has a full computer lab that is connected to the Internet. In addition, every classroom has at least two computers connected to the Internet. The school also offers a distance learning program where classes are able to connect via the television to other schools or to take a field trip without leaving the school. Last year, students visited such places as the Cincinnati Zoo and a Holocaust museum in California.

Alloway has a staff of thirty-one teachers, one guidance counselor, and two administrators, which are all female with the exception of the Superintendent of Schools. Since the district is small, the business and child study team staff is shared among three districts. Thirty-eight percent of the faculty has a master's degree and one faculty member is in the final stages of completing her doctorate.

The township of Alloway is a small close-knit community that does not have the large housing developments, strip malls, and fast food stores that are commonplace in many New Jersey towns. Alloway's downtown area consists of two small local convenience stores, a hairdresser, a deli, a gas station, and a bank. The nearest restaurants, fast food establishments, and grocery store are located in Woodstown, New Jersey.

Politically, the township is run by a township committee that elects a mayor from among their elected body. The school district is governed by a nine member school board

that is elected by the community. While Alloway has a local ambulance and fire company all police matters are under the jurisdiction of the NJ State Police.

There is generally a very low crime rate in Alloway; however, the community was the site of a brutal murder which still affects the community. Six years ago a fourth grade student was murdered by her neighbor on her way home from school. This is an incident that was very difficult for the community to discuss and it has only been recently that people have begun to address this event.

The district has a very active PTA, made up of many involved parents and every faculty member. They have raised money to improve the playground equipment and to purchase classroom supplies. Despite this large interactive PTA, there has also been some discord between the community and the school. In the past, there have been problems during teacher contract negotiations that have resulted in some very negative feelings. However, while the 2000-2003 teacher contract almost resulted in a strike, the new 2003-2006 contract was settled peacefully before June, 2003. Thus the Alloway Education Association and the school board have hope that some of the nasty interactions of the past are over. Nonetheless, the community has failed to pass the school budget for the last two years, due in part to a high tax increase. The school has attempted to inform the public why the increase is needed and where the money is going by sending out pamphlets about the budget prior to the vote (see Appendix A).

The community is proud of their school and involved in what is happening there. Although there have been problems among the community, school board, education association, and school leaders, these are no different from those found in any other

community. Despite these problems, the public sees their school as an integral part of their community.

Organization of the study:

The remainder of the study will be organized in the following chapters: chapter two will review the current literature on bullying and schools; chapter three will address the design of this study; chapter four will present the research findings of the study; and chapter five will offer the conclusion and implications of this study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In July of 2003, the headlines were unnerving, “No Doubt Massacre was in the Making” (Arrington, 2003). Three adolescent boys were stopped before they began a shooting spree with their arsenal of weapons. Why would three seemingly stable boys decide to attack members of their community? One suspected reason is that they wanted revenge for teasing to which they were subjected in school (Arrington, 2003). This story and the many school shootings that have occurred over the last few years have propelled the issue of bullying as a major concern in America’s schools (Heinrichs, 2003).

Bullying is an issue that should be studied in schools because bullying has an effect on the children and the safety of the school community. The massacre in the making story, the 1999 Columbine shootings, and the other school shootings that have occurred over the last few years, cause one to ask what reasons have been cited as a cause for these children to become so violent. When teachers and administrators were interviewed in 2002 on the topic of school violence, they said that the primary cause of the violence was the students’ home life and events in their community. However, when students were asked the same question, they stated that the primary cause of school violence was “being picked on.” This cause rated very low in the survey done by the teachers and administrators (Thornton, 2002).

Over the last two years, the faculty and administration of Alloway School has seen a rise of bullying among the female populations in the seventh and eighth grade classes. The

staff would like to create an effective program that addresses this issue with the students and creates solutions that will help eliminate the bullying behaviors that put the students at risk. This study hopes to design a program that meets the needs of the school and will be continued after the study ends.

Prior to the 1990s, there were very few researchers who addressed this topic. One person was Dr. Olweus from Norway who started his research in the late 1970s and is still conducting research today (Heinrichs, 2003). However, since Columbine, the literature on bullying has grown from a near non-existence of information to large numbers of articles and books written over the last few years. This increase of research on bullying has produced some major advances in understanding. Among these are:

- Better definitions of the bully and the target;
- Reasons why bullying is a serious issue in schools;
- Gender differences in relation to bullying;
- Covert versus overt acts of aggression;
- Methods to address the issue of bullying with students; and
- Ways to create an effective anti-bullying program.

Bullying can be defined as an “unprovoked physical or psychological abuse of an individual by one or a group of students over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse” (Dapper & Meyer-Adams, 2002). Batsche and Knoff’s study has shown that this abuse tends to peak in the middle grades (as cited in Dapper & Meyer-Adams, 2002). Children are bullied for many reasons which can include physical features, clothes, religion, any type of weakness, or learning disabilities (Dapper & Meyer-Adams, 2003; Heinrichs, 2003).

In order to understand bullying there must be an understanding of the characteristics of both the targets and the bully. Research has been conducted in an attempt to determine the characteristics of the victims and the bullies in order to better understand the motivations behind these children (Heinrichs, 2003; Schwartz, 2000). Heinrichs divided the targets or victims into two subgroups: the passive target and the provocative target. The passive targets are the quiet students in class, the ones who can relate better to the teacher than to their classmates. These children will be very insecure, emotional and non aggressive; have poor self-esteem; and show difficulty in asserting themselves with their peers. Physically these are the students who may seem weaker than their classmates, a little more cautious, and demonstrate an inability to be effective in games, sports, and fights. These children tend to be viewed as easy targets by their bullies (2003).

Schwartz focused his study on the second subgroup that Heinrichs identified. Schwartz's work looked at the aggressive victims which Heinrichs calls the "provocative target." These are the students that stand out as aggressive but, in the end, are dominated by more powerful aggressors. These are students who are disliked by their peers; display highly disruptive and rude behaviors; and are hyperactive, irritating, and immature. They may attempt to fight back when bullied, but ineffectively, and may be disliked by adults, including teachers. Provocative targets may even bully children who are weaker than themselves (Heinrichs, 2003; Schwartz, 2000). In his research Schwartz determined that the provocative target is a very important subgroup of victimized children that should be studied to determine ways of identifying these children in the early stages of their development (2000).

Bullying is about power, the bully's goal is "to dominate others and assert themselves through aggression or threats of aggression" (Heinrichs, 2003). Research has found that there are a lot of myths surrounding the term "bully." Thompson and Grace in their work, *Best Friends, Worst Enemies Understanding the Social Lives of Children (2001)*, took apart this myth by first looking at the stereotypical picture of the bully, the person who has no real friends and who wields his power to make other people do his bidding. This myth is evident in many television shows and movies. For example, the very popular Bart Simpson of *The Simpson's* is plagued by the bigger student Nelson in many episodes of this popular cartoon. The town bully, Nelson, who is portrayed as a large student with a dysfunctional family and poor social skills, will often convince Bart to take part in activities that he doesn't want to in order to be popular or to avoid being beat up. Thompson and Grace found that these types of bullies do exist, but not in every classroom or in every school. Rather these researchers see the bullies as leaders of the group who are doing work that the majority supports. The bullies are only in power because the majority wants them to be in power and bullies are abusing the victims that the majority wants them to abuse. It is also important to realize that these bullies are not victims of low self esteem, as some research have suggested, nor do they experience guilt over their actions. Dr. Olweus concluded that bullies feel good about their actions because they could justify in their actions as fulfilling the desires of the group (as cited in Thompson & Grace, 2001).

When defining the roles and characteristics of bullies and their targets, there is one other subgroup that must be pointed out: "the bystanders," students who do not participate in bullying but silently allow the bullying to go on. These bystanders may be afraid to stop the bullying because it may mean that they lose their social status or become victims themselves.

They may feel powerless to do anything about the bullying and may even feel guilty about allowing it to continue (Heinrichs, 2003). Other bystanders may encourage the bullying because they feel that it is acceptable to target that particular student for some reason (Thompson & Grace, 2001).

The rise of school violence is a major reason why schools need to focus on bullying issues and ways to deal with these issues. Researchers have found that many students are wasting their energy on concerns about bullying instead of focusing on their learning and that some have turned to violent avenues to deal with their feelings of persecution (Dapper, 2002).

While the immediate reaction to the term “school violence” is school shootings and Columbine. School violence is more than just school shootings and physical violence; it also includes acts of nonphysical aggression such as peer pressure, harassment, and teasing (Lienhardt & Willert, 2002). The metal detectors can go up to keep out the guns and other weapons, the zero tolerance laws can be created to punish people who bring weapons to schools, and the schools can write policies that address physical violence, all in an effort to end school violence. But students often do not feel safe in their schools; many find schools a hostile world where they face some form of bullying (Heinrichs, 2003; Thornton, 2002). Some students can’t walk down the hall without being called a name; some children on the playground are excluded from the other children’s activities. It is time to rewrite the term “school violence” to include these and other nonphysical acts of aggression (Lienhardt & Willet, 2002).

While nonphysical acts of aggression may not seem as dangerous as a weapon in the school, they do have a major effect on the students and the school community. Research has

shown that children and adolescents that are targets of bullying will “frequently experience adjustment problems such as low self-esteem, loneliness, social anxiety, and depression” (Graham, 2002). These children suffer from more than just the acts of aggression from their peers; they also suffer from rejection by their peers. Such rejection may cause the child to develop behavioral and work ethics problems in school. They may also suffer from psychological problems such as depression (Paquette & Underwood, 1999). Dr. Stephen Joseph, a psychologist from the University of Warwick, has even linked bullying with posttraumatic stress disorder. His research concluded that it is possible for bullying to become such a debilitating experience for an adolescent that she could experience this posttraumatic anxiety (“New Research Dispels,” 2003).

Although bullying is often perceived to be a male problem researchers have recently begun studying among the female population of the school. One question is whether there a gender difference in bullying. Researchers have found a pattern of covert aggression occurring in the female population of today’s schools. Some researchers also called this form of aggression “social” or “relational” aggression (Simmons, 2002; Vail, 2002; Casey-Cannon, Hayward & Gowen, 2001; Paquette & Underwood, 1999). Covert aggression is the opposite of the common view of bullying, overt aggression, where the acts of aggression can be seen. Covert aggression is hidden and its purpose it to control the social lives of the victim. This can be done by threatening to end a friendship, excluding the victim from activities, and gossiping. One reason for this type of bullying to be more frequent among females is because of the importance they give to social relationships. Therefore, a female

victim of relational aggression may face serious issues of self-worth and may fall into feelings of depression (Simmons, 2002; Vail, 2002; Casey-Cannon, Hayward & Gowen, 2001; Paquette & Underwood, 1999).

The victims of covert or relational aggressions may feel alone in this world, believing that they are the only victims of such cruelty. This is understandable since the anti-bullying work being done in schools focuses on the overt acts of aggression and ignores the covert acts of aggression. In 2002, Rachel Simmons concluded her research in this topic by publishing, *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls*. This work brought the topic of aggression in girls to the attention of researchers and school officials and ended the silence on the topic. Prior to her work, most research done on bullying focused on physical acts which were more common with boys. But covert aggression is not new: most women have a story about being the victim of a malicious act whose purpose was to undermine their self worth and social acceptance. Simmons and other researchers are looking for more studies on covert or relational aggression so that it will be addressed on the same level as overt acts of bullying (Simmons, 2002; Vail, 2002; Casey-Cannon, Hayward & Gowen, 2001; Paquette & Underwood, 1999).

Society is raising a generation of girls that believe their only self-worth lies in how this society accepts them. Covert acts of aggression may not give “girls black eyes or bloody lips” (Vail, 2002) but it does leave a mark; it just isn’t seen as easily as the black eye. In 1994, Dr. Mary Piper, a psychologist from the Midwest, published a book entitled *Reviving Ophelia* which addresses a growing concern she had when counseling adolescent girls. In her practice she was seeing a growing number of eating disorders, suicide attempts, depression, and problems in school among her adolescent female patients. She found that the

covert pressures these teens were facing in their daily lives were destroying their persona. They were finding acceptance in their attractiveness, clothes, and even sexual behavior rather than in their intelligence, athletic or artistic talent. To emphasize her point, Dr. Pipher took the name of a character from Hamlet to grace the title of her work. Ophelia was a happy and well adjusted girl who reached adolescence and fell in love with Hamlet. Instead of being free thinking about her destiny, she now only lived for his approval and in the end committed suicide because she did not gain approval from him. At the end of Ophelia's life she drowned in the weight of her own clothes a symbol of the problems that were weighing her down in life. Adolescent girls are at risk of becoming Ophelia because rather than looking within to judge their worth as human beings, they are looking at society—which includes their schools- for approval (Pipher, 1994). Too often, that acceptance is lacking, often complicated by purposeful negative acts of bullying.

Most research shows that schools have been addressing bullying but with the focus on the overt acts of aggression. The focus must change to include covert acts of aggression which can be just as damaging as overt acts of aggression. In order to address this issue, schools must focus on changing what is and isn't acceptable behavior. Students cannot continue believing social aggressive behavior is permissible. This change must be school wide so that the changes will become part of the whole school culture. One way to change this behavior is to teach girls how to be a friend and to use the power they have by becoming positive leaders. They should be taught not to hide anger but rather learn how to express it. Most importantly, students must be taught that mistreating friends is not part of friendship (Vail, 2002). This is not an easy task because the girls have to be ready to embrace the idea

of changing their behavior. It is important to remember that while adults hate what the girls are doing to each other, the girls do not always see their behavior as wrong (Simmons, 2002).

Bullying is a behavior that has ramifications for both the individual and the community. The individual faces a spiraling self worth and possible psychological disorders while the school community faces a rise in violence among their students. Schools must address the rise of bullying among their school population by creating an effective anti-bullying program that includes all of the stakeholders and addresses both types of aggression, covert and overt. Utilizing all of the stakeholders in the decision- making process will create a program that addresses the needs of the whole school community (Migliore, 2003; Leinhardt & Willert, 2002). There are many ways to create an environment of anti-bullying. To start, students need to be taught about bullying and what to do if they are a victim. Schools should have a clear anti-bullying policy that includes a reporting process. Students should feel comfortable reporting bullying activities knowing they will receive support from the adults. Finally, adults that work with the children should be in-serviced about bullying, ways to address it, and methods to create a positive environment (Migliore, 2003).

Bullying has become an important issue for schools and their stakeholders because it affects everyone. There are children who refuse to go to school because they do not want to face their tormentors; there are parents who do not know what to do or how to handle a depressed child; there is a community fearful of where the next incident of school violence will be; and there is the school trying to figure out what to do next. Bullying is not a new story and it is not about to disappear because of a discipline policy. There must be a concentrated effort to address the physical and nonphysical acts that are incorporated in the

term “bullying.” Finally, schools need to design a program that teaches the different kinds of bullying and explains why these behaviors are wrong.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Introduction

Participation in this study was made available to the entire seventh and eighth grade female population at Alloway School. Once students volunteered they were placed in small study groups (4-6 students) with other girls in the same grade level. Prior to the start of the study, students completed two surveys on bullying. The students spent the next two months attending weekly meetings, run by prepared leaders, where they discussed the problem of bullying, defined key terms, and created ways to eliminate it in their schools. The leaders recorded their observations at each meeting. At the conclusion of the study groups, the students were administered another survey about bullying.

Development and design of the research instrumentation

This study requires a way to determine if a behavior change has occurred with the students involved in the program. Therefore, three different research instruments were used that will aid in collecting data that shows if any behavior change had occurred. The first instrument was the Social Behavior Questionnaire (SBQ) (see Appendix B). This questionnaire was designed by Galen and Underwood (1997) and was discussed in their article "A Developmental Investigation of Social Aggression Among Children." The researcher selected this survey because it helped to establish the level of bullying the students were already experiencing and their feelings. This then created a benchmark of student experiences against which was later judged the data collected during the actual study.

At the first meeting, the students were presented with a second questionnaire: “Myths and Facts about Bullying” (see Appendix C). This survey was published in *Bully-Proofing Your School: A Comprehensive Approach for Elementary Schools* in 2000. This questionnaire was used to gauge the level of understanding the students had about the topic of bullying. At the conclusion of the study, the students were re-administered this questionnaire to determine any change in their level of understanding on bullying during the program.

The final instrument used was the “Observation Checklist” (see Appendix D). This checklist was designed by the researcher, in order to record the observations of the leaders of the individual groups. The checklist was created to allow the leaders to record the discussions of the groups, to note if they were observing any signs of bullying/victimization, and to determine if the bullying situations discussed were covert or overt acts of aggression.

Description of the sampling and sampling techniques

The study was open to all seventh/eighth grade female students at Alloway School. Interested students were placed in groups according to their grade level and the day that they were able to stay after school. The leaders were placed with groups according to their availability after school.

Description of the data collection approach

The students were introduced to this study during their social studies class; interested female students were given a study overview letter, parent permission letter, and a participant permission letter to review and sign (see Appendix E). The overview letter gave information about the study and telephone numbers for parents to use if they required more information or wanted to review the research instruments.

The Alloway Township School Board was given a copy of the permission letters and research instruments for approval prior to the start of the study. All were approved by the board. The Institutional Review Board of Rowan University was given copies of the instruments and they approved the study in the fall of 2003.

Before the study began, students were given the Social Behavior Questionnaire (SBQ) to complete. The students completed this survey on their own during their social studies class. Two of the students were classified students with limited reading ability; a special education teacher read their questionnaire aloud to them so they were able to complete it with the same level of efficiency as the other participants. These two students were in the same room while the other participants were taking their survey; however, the special needs teacher had them at a separate table and read in a very quiet voice so they would not disturb the other students.

The groups were organized to meet six times over a two month period. The groups were run by a seventh/eighth grade teacher or the guidance counselor. Each teacher had read *Odd Girl Out* by Rachel Carson (2000) and was given a copy of the research study to prepare for her role in the study groups. At the first meeting, the girls completed the "Myths and Facts about Bullying" questionnaire. This survey was also re-administered at the final meeting. Throughout the meetings, the teachers completed the "Observation Checklist" which gave an overview of what was discussed at each meeting.

Description of the data analysis plan

The data was analyzed on an on-going basis. The results of the SBQ indicated the level of bullying experiences the participants were involved in prior to the start of the study. Week one of the study groups was used to determine the level of understanding the students

had about bullying by evaluating the results of the “Myths and Facts about Bullying” questionnaire. The survey was re-administrated at the conclusion of the study. These results were then evaluated to determine if the student’s level of understanding about bullying increased during the study.

The “Observation Checklist” was analyzed throughout the study. The checklist was divided into several parts. The first section analyzed was the level of participation of the students, which determined the level of student involvement. The second section determined if there were students that were showing signs of being a victim or a bully. The third section noted if the bullying experiences discussed were covert or overt acts of aggression. The fourth section recorded the results of the leader’s observations about the students’ willingness to report bullying experiences. The final section of the checklist included the observations and comments of the leader. This checklist was the most important piece of data collection because it provided a weekly view of the study group meetings. The data received from the checklist was evaluated to show how the girls were changing and growing in their knowledge and perceptions of bullying.

At the conclusion of the study, the data was used to determine the success of the program. To determine success, the data must show that the participants have an increased knowledge and awareness of bullying and have designed ways to eliminate it in their school.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to create an effective anti-bullying program that addresses the concerns of both the teachers and the students and creates a behavioral change in the students. During the study students were given two different surveys and their behaviors were recorded. Two different student surveys and teachers' checklist of students' behaviors were recorded during the program. These diagnostic tools provided data used to determine the effectiveness of the program and the degree of change in students' behavior. Results from the seventh and eighth grade students were analyzed separately and then compared.

To show that this program was effective in both the seventh/eighth grade the data must answer the following questions:

- Did students experience behavioral changes during this program?
- Has the students' definition of "bully" changed to include covert as well as overt aggression?
- Did the participants deem the program a success?

The first survey (see Appendix B) was designed to measure the level of bullying experiences the students had been facing before this study began and their feelings about bullying issues. This questionnaire contained 12 bullying situations and the girls were asked to rate these situations on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) based on two questions: Question A: "How hurt would you be if this happened to you?" and Question B: "How often

does something like this happen in the group of friends you hang around with?” The second survey (see Appendix C) was used to identify and differentiate between the myths and facts that surround bullying and to evaluate if the students still identified myths as facts at the end of the study. The third survey (see Appendix D) was a checklist that the leaders of the groups used to record their observations during the study. Of the three instruments used, this questionnaire provided the most data because it provided a record of the students’ reactions to bullying and tracked their behavioral changes throughout the study.

Students were asked to complete the SBQ survey (see Appendix B) during their social studies class. All of the students who participated (and one student who began but did not complete the study) completed a survey. The only personal information that the students were asked to provide was their age and grade level. This enabled the researcher to categorize the data as either seventh or eighth grade.

In the eighth grade, students gave high ratings to both the covert and overt situations when responding to Question A, “How hurt would you be if this situation had happened to you”. The following chart shows the breakdown of the ratings given by students for this question in relation to each of the twelve situations.

Table 1: Eighth grade ratings to Question A (How hurt would you be if this happened to you?) in the SBQ survey

Situation	# that Rated 5	# that Rated 4	# that Rated 3	# that Rated 2	# that Rated 1
#1	5	4	2	5	1
#2	3	7	3	4	0
#3	8	5	3	1	0
#4	3	8	4	2	0
#5	0	2	3	6	6
#6	6	7	2	1	1
#7	2	4	7	3	1
#8	1	6	5	4	1
#9	0	6	5	3	3
#10	5	2	5	2	3
#11	6	4	4	2	1
#12	6	3	4	2	2
Totals	45	58	47	35	20

The first six items presented covert aggressive situations and the last six showed overt aggressive situations. While the students gave generally high ratings (three or better) that they would be hurt if this happened to them, there was one situation to which the majority of the students gave a low rating (2 or lower). This situation focused on a bully informing a student when she was allowed to play a game. These entire results from this tables show that the students are responsive to the hurt felt by a bullying situation whether that situation was a covert or overt aggressive act.

The ratings to the bullying situations that the students in the eighth grade gave to Question B were very different from their responses to Question B. Question B asked the students to rate the situations again on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) based on how

often each bullying situation occurred in their group of friends. The following chart outlines the ratings the students gave for Question B in each situation.

Table 2: Eighth grade ratings for Question B (How often does something like this happen in the group of friends you hang around with?) in the SBQ survey

Situation	# That rated 5	# that rated 4	# that rated 3	# that rated 2	# that rated 1
#1	0	0	1	3	3
#2	0	0	2	9	6
#3	0	0	2	5	10
#4	2	2	2	6	5
#5	1	0	2	2	12
#6	0	2	2	5	8
#7	0	0	1	4	12
#8	0	2	2	2	11
#9	0	0	0	9	8
#10	0	1	1	3	12
#11	0	1	1	4	11
#12	0	0	0	3	14
Totals	3	8	16	58	112

These data show that, at the beginning of the study, the eighth grade students believed that neither covert nor overt bullying situations were occurring within their groups of friends. However, the leaders' observational checklists painted a much different story. The eighth grade students provided stories and demonstrated emotions which indicated situations of bullying within their groups of friends: students who had excluded other students, students that they perceived as "bullies," and students who had been labeled by the others with names that negatively described their physical features.

The seventh grade ratings for this survey were very similar to the eighth grade results. A majority of the seventh graders gave high ratings (3 or higher) on most of the situations

when asked to rate Question A and low ratings (2 or lower) on all of the situations when asked to rate Question B. The following table outlines their results on Question A.

Table 3: Seventh grade ratings to Question A (How hurt would you be if this happened to you?) in the SBQ survey

Situation	# that rated 5	# that rated 4	# that rated 3	# that rated 2	# that rated 1
#1	3	2	1	1	1
#2	2	2	3	0	1
#3	5	1	2	0	0
#4	2	0	1	3	2
#5	0	1	2	3	2
#6	3	2	2	1	0
#7	3	2	1	1	1
#8	2	2	0	3	1
#9	2	1	1	1	3
#10	1	1	3	1	2
#11	4	2	0	2	0
#12	4	3	0	1	0
Totals	31	19	16	17	13

While a majority of the students said they would be very much to somewhat hurt in most situations, there were two situations that received low ratings. These were covert acts and one was the same incident that the eighth grade students rated low. The second situation low-rated situation was an act of exclusion where a student made a face and a comment when told whom she had to partner with in a class project. Situation eight and nine received equal numbers of high and low ratings. Both situations were examples of overt aggression, involving one student shoving another after making an unkind remark. These data show that the seventh grade students are confused as to what is bullying.

When asked to rate question B, seventh graders had results similar to those of eighth graders. The following table outlines their results.

Table 4: Seventh grade ratings for Question B (How often does something like this happen in the group friends of you hang around with?) in the SBQ survey

Situation	# That rated 5	# that rated 4	# that rated 3	# that rated 2	# that rated 1
#1	1	1	0	1	5
#2	0	0	1	2	5
#3	0	0	1	1	6
#4	0	1	0	1	6
#5	0	0	0	1	7
#6	0	0	0	1	7
#7	0	0	0	1	7
#8	0	0	0	3	6
#9	0	0	1	2	6
#10	0	0	0	1	7
#11	0	0	0	1	7
#12	0	0	1	1	6
Totals	1	2	4	16	75

The seventh graders reported in the same manner as the eighth graders; they did not perceive that their friends were bullying them. Yet, the leaders of the study groups reported in their observational checklists situations which the students related were bullying, even though they didn't see them that way. One leader clearly stated, "I don't think they feel they have been bullied." However, using the results of the observational checklists, it could be interpreted that incidents of bullying in the seventh grade is worse than that in the eighth grade.

At the start of the group meetings, students' behaviors and thoughts indicated that they would be hurt if they were bullied, but perceptions were that they were not actually being bullied by their friends. The next task was to create a way of changing their behaviors and thoughts and to find a way of recording this change. The data collection instrument used

to record this change was the observational checklist. This was the most important instrument because it gave an anecdotal report of the individual group meetings. With this checklist the leaders were able to report their reflections of the group and some of the discussion that arose during the group meetings. This provided excellent feedback on the successfulness of the group meetings because the checklist showed the weekly change in students' behavior and their growing understanding of covert bullying.

The checklist had seven items and included spaces for the leader to provide comments. The first two items reported the number of students participating in or listening to the group discussion. Items three and four were designed for the leaders to report any victim or bullying tendencies in their students. Item five allowed the leaders to share some of the bullying experiences discussed in their group and report whether each incident was a covert or overt act of aggression. Item six looked at the bystander, and asked the leaders to document if their students felt comfortable reporting incidents of bullying to teachers and administrators. The last item provided leaders a place to report any other information they would like to share about the meeting.

The researcher wanted the girls to be comfortable sharing and decided that placing older girls with younger ones might create awkward situations which would impede open communication. Thus, groups were divided into three groups of eighth graders and two groups of seventh graders.

The data collected from the leaders' checklists were first analyzed separately by grade and then the two grades were compared. The following paragraphs are a breakdown of the data collected from leaders' checklists.

The eighth grade results showed that the students were actively engaged in the meetings and more than willing to share. There were meetings where a few students did not talk much, but they were reported as still being engaged in the discussion as active listeners. One study group leader reported that during the first meeting of her group there was one student who was listening while very quietly doodling on her paper, as if she were afraid to speak up to her peers. This was noteworthy because this particular student is very active and talkative in the classroom and it surprised the leader that the student's behavior during the meeting was so different. By the conclusion of all of the meetings, all students were actively involved in the discussions. This shows that while some students were afraid to share their thoughts and feelings about bullying in the beginning, as they meet they became more relaxed with the small group, they opened up and shared.

All of the eighth grade group leaders reported that they had students who had been or were currently a victim of bullying. The students were filled with stories of situations that had occurred to themselves or their friends. One report contained a story about an eighth grade girl who was experiencing a bullying situation in her class. What made this story notable was the fact that not only did she feel comfortable enough in her group to share a distressing situation but the other group members rallied around her and gave her advice.

Only one eighth grade leader reported that she had a student who exhibited bullying tendencies. She saw the student as extremely aggressive and felt this student could become a bully in certain situations. While none of the other leaders reported seeing a bully in their group, one leader reported that she saw a lot of situations where her girls were bystanders to a bullying act.

When it came to a discussion of the actual bullying acts, the eighth grade girls shared mostly incidences of covert acts that included exclusions, teasing, rumors, and name calling. However, there were some discussions of overt acts of aggression. Students in one group talked about a boy who frightened them and told how he would pick on students who were weaker than he was. Another group discussed sexual harassment and the possibility of this occurring in their class. It is interesting to note that some of the situations discussed included bullying acts with boys and girls. In addition, the situations shared were not always overt acts. One group shared a story about a nickname that class members had given one of the boys in their made him very uncomfortable. This situation moved the group into a discussion about bystanders and whether they would report such bullying behavior.

At first the eighth graders said that they are not comfortable with reporting bullying situations. Since they attend a very small school they were afraid that other students would find out that they had reported the situation and they would be labeled a tattle-tale. They also feared they would not be taken seriously by the teacher/administrator. As the meetings progressed, the students did begin to change their feelings and identified specific teachers that they could confide in. These teachers were the guidance counselor and the math teacher. They said that they would choose the math teacher because she is easy to talk to and they could use getting extra math help as an excuse for a private discussion with her.

This discussion of reported bullying did open the discussion of the bystander with the groups. While some girls discussed situations that must be reported, there were other girls who were insulted with the term "bystander." The latter group said that people (adults) do not understand that sometimes they can't get involved with a bullying situation because it

would only make matters worse. However, by the conclusion of the study, these same girls were ready to battle bullying situations and stand up for classmates who they felt were being mistreated.

The last question of the checklist was the place for the leaders to expound on any discussions or share additional comments from their meetings. The leaders remarked that their girls were responding in a positive manner towards the meetings and taking the discussions seriously. They noted that the groups were changing their definition of bullying from fighting to include the covert acts of aggression. There were also discussions on how to stop bullying which included signing an anti-bully pledge. Other discussions in the groups focused on peer pressure and the society's view of women as objects and how these items are part of bullying. Finally the leaders reported that the girls were actively involved, enjoying the experience, and wanted the study groups to last all year instead of six weeks.

While some of the data collected on the seventh grade observational checklists were similar to the eighth grade, the seventh grade students were not as prolific or as prepared to discuss bullying. As with the eighth grade, the seventh grade students were reluctant at first to open up but began to share and discuss as the study progressed. However, the seventh grade students did not experience the same type of behavioral changes as the eighth grade girls did. Seventh grade students were very reluctant to admit that the situations they were sharing were bullying. Even after forming definitions on bullying and admitting that they could relate to the character Stargirl in the novel they had read, they still were not ready to admit that they were bullied or bullies themselves.

One seventh grade group included a special needs student who is a constant victim and who shared her stories in the group meetings. The leader reported that the other group

members would get impatient and talk down to her. This leader discussed the role of being a friend and supporting each other in bullying situations. But this did not work because the student reported that her own group members were excluding her at lunch.

The data from the seventh grade show that the girls were not ready to discuss the topic of bullying with their peers. This proves that the study was more successful with eighth grade students who are older and more mature than the seventh graders. The eighth graders were more engaged in the groups because they are a maturity level where they are able to deal with bullying. Dr. Pipher in her novel, *Reviving Ophelia*, reflected on her clients and how they were not ready to discuss the bullying that they experienced until they were in high school and the situations were slowing down. They were now able to look at bullying, analyze it, and reflect on their emotions (1994). This could be what is happening in the seventh and eighth grade.

The final survey instrument that was used was the Myths and Facts about Bullying survey. This survey was a list of eighteen statements about bullying that the students had to identify as either a myth or a fact. Both the seventh and eighth grade students did very well on this survey. The following table outlines their results

Table 5: Seventh and eighth grade results of the Myths and Facts about Bullying survey

Statement	# of 7 th graders that Chose Myth (M)	# of 8 th graders that Chose MYth (M)	# of 7 th graders that chose Fact (F)	# of 8 th graders that chose Fact (F)	#of 7 th graders that chose both M/f	# of 8 th graders that chose both M/F	Correct Answer
1	5	15	0	1	0	1	M
2	1	6	4	8	0	3	M [^] *
3	4	14	1	1	0	2	M
4	3	15	2	1	0	1	M
5	3	10	1	5	1	2	F [^] *
6	3	15	2	2	0	0	M
7	2	12	2	4	1	1	M
8	3	3	2	10	0	4	F
9	5	11	0	2	0	4	M
10	3	10	2	5	0	11	M
11	3	13	2	3	0	1	M
12	2	7	2	9	0	1	F
13	3	14	1	2	1	1	M
14	1	9	4	7	0	1	F*
15	4	4	3	9	0	4	M*
16	4	16	1	1	0	0	M
17	4	13	0	2	1	1	M
18	0	4	5	10	0	3	F

[^]= question that a majority of the 7th graders selected the wrong answer

*= question that a majority of the 8th graders selected the wrong answer

A majority of the seventh graders answered only two of the eighteen statements incorrectly. However, these two statements might have been ambiguous to the students. The first statement was: Bullies are insecure and have low self-esteem. The second statement was: Bullies are physically larger than their victims. Both statements confused some students because, depending on their own experiences, students could correctly answer either as a myth or fact. For instance, a bully's physical size might be a factor in overt aggression but not important in covert aggressive situations where popularity, not physical strength, is the weapon.

A majority of the eighth grade students gave incorrect answers for four of the eighteen statements. Two of the statements were the same ones that the seventh graders

missed. The other missed statements were about therapy for bullies and bringing parents of the bully and victim together. It was surprising that a majority of the students answered these questions incorrectly. It may have been because these topics were not discussed in the groups and the students had no basis for answering. The Myths and Facts about Bullying survey showed that both the seventh and eighth grade students gained a lot of new knowledge about bullying and were able to use this knowledge to debunk myths about bullying.

At the conclusion of the study, the eighth grade students demonstrated that they had redefined the term “bully” and changed their behaviors in relation to bullying. For them, this study was successful because they were willing to address bullying in their school, discuss ways to end it, create ways to share what they had learned with other students, and change their own behaviors. The seventh graders learned a definition of the term “bully” and were able to debunk myths on the topic but they did not demonstrate that they were ready to deal with bullying and how to stop it in their school.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

Introduction

This study was designed to address the concerns that the teachers and students at Alloway School had about bullying among seventh and eighth grade girls and to create a program that would address these concerns. For this program to be successful it had to create a behavior change in the students, redefine the term “bully” to include covert acts of aggression, and be viewed as successful by the students. The data that was collected during the study showed that the eighth grade girls met the requirements that deemed this program successful and the seventh grade girls did not show success in this program.

Conclusions and Implications

At the conclusion of the study, the eighth grade girls were ready to work at ending bullying in their school. One group of girls discussed a student who had been called a negative name based on his physical appearance and questioned whether this student liked this nickname. They believed that he didn’t because he wouldn’t always answer to the name. After that meeting, one of the girls approached him and discussed the situation with him. She found that he hated the name. The next day on the bus, two of the girls stood up to a very popular student and told him to stop calling their fellow student a name that he did not like. That particular student has never been called that name again. This may seem like a small battle and a minor victory but is in fact a major triumph. At the beginning of the study, these two girls did not think that calling a nickname was bullying; by the end of the study,

they were ready to stand up to their classmates. That demonstrates a behavior change in the girls.

The eighth grade students further demonstrated that this program was successful by their willingness to continue it. They wanted to have more meetings throughout the year so they could work on other situations they were facing in school. They also discussed ways to broaden this study by designing ways to share what they had learned with other students. One suggestion was to act out skits and discuss bullying with younger students. They embraced the study and were ready to take it to the next level.

The seventh graders demonstrated that they gained new knowledge on types of bullying and were willing to share this new information. However, they showed that they are not willing to change their own behaviors and work at eliminating bullying in their school. Despite listening to a fellow group member share her stories of being a victim, they still continued to treat her differently and to exclude her from activities. It also took longer for the seventh graders to share bullying experiences and they still had trouble admitting that these incidents were bullying.

Implication of Study on Leadership Skills

Bullying is a problem in every school in every state. Because no school is excluded from this problem, leaders need to find a program that will assist in creating a bully-free school. This program proves that the problem exists and gives the students a forum to discuss the problem and develop ways to address it.

This study required a lot of planning on the part of the coordinator. The coordinator had to introduce the study, solicit volunteers among both the staff and student body, prepare the leaders, form the groups, and monitor the groups. The coordinator also had to create the

necessary forms that would evaluate the successfulness of the program. Furthermore, the coordinator needed to provide the group leaders with information about running the groups properly and addressing the concerns outlined in the study.

Implications of the Study on Organizational Change

It is hoped that this study has helped change behaviors among seventh and eighth grade female students in Alloway Township School and has begun to create an environment that is bully-free. It is also hoped that the teachers have gained a realistic view of the bullying problem in their building through the use of small discussion groups conducted in a setting where the students are comfortable with sharing their problems.

Further Study

This study was highly successful in the eighth grade and needs to be replicated with future eighth grade students. However, the program needs to be redesigned for the seventh grade because the students were not ready to share their experiences. One idea to change the program for this grade is to have the eighth graders teach the seventh graders about bullying through peer coaching and role-playing. This might be more effective in helping seventh graders to define the term and share ways to eliminate it.

Finally, this study should be piloted with eighth grade boys. The situations that the girls discussed in the groups included both genders. This validates the fact that the boys are also dealing with covert and overt acts of aggression in the school. However, there are no male teachers in the school to act as group leaders. This problem might be overcome by tapping into community resources for locating effective male leaders.

Due to the success that was experienced in this study it should become a fixture in the school community of Alloway Township School.

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APPENDIX A
BUDGET NEWSLETTER



Alloway Township Board of Education

Budget News

2003-2004

Alloway Township Board of Education 43 Cedar Street, Alloway NJ 08001 856-935-1622 Ext. 312 joyceer@alloway.k12.nj.us

Major Impactors of the 2003-2004 Budget

- **Flat State Funding**
 - Only \$35,600 more than in 2000 but 20+ not funded
- **No surplus available to offset taxes**
 - Compared to \$170,834 used in current budget
 - Projected surplus to be only 3 percent
- **Increased cost of employee benefits - \$132,000**
- **Salary Increases - \$134,000**
- **Technology Increases - \$83,000**

This Budget Supports...

- Present Staffing Levels & Programs
- Pre-K Program
- All Day Kindergarten
- One Class Size Reduction Teacher
- Instructional Materials & Resources
- Curriculum Renewal
- Staff Development
- State Standards
- Facility Maintenance

Flat State Funding Impacts Budget Again

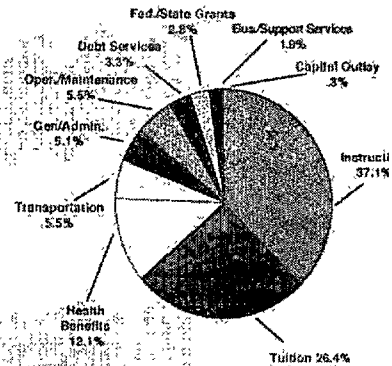
With the State's share of funding falling for yet another year districts such as Alloway who have limited ratables, escalating fixed costs and enrollment increases are hit the hardest. Flat funding and the lack of availability of surplus to support the budget, as in the past, have caused a 27 cent increase in the tax rate.

With Alloway only receiving \$35,600 more in State aid than in the year 2000, the district must rely on a small tax increase, 3 cents less than last year. Of that \$35,600 expected aid \$20,000 is not funded.

Reliance on surplus to offset tax increases is not a reality this year since the projected surplus is expected to be only 3 percent. In comparison, last year the district used surplus in the amount of \$170,834 which was applied to the 2002-2003 budget.

The three areas in the budget that have seen increases are the cost of employee benefits in the amount of \$132,000, salary increases at a cost of \$134,000 and increases in technology in the amount of \$83,000.

BUDGET ALLOCATION



Instruction	\$2,246,343	37.1%
Tuition	\$1,595,924	26.4%
Health Benefits	\$734,105	12.1%
Transportation	\$329,714	5.5%
General Administration	\$310,170	5.1%
Operations/Maintenance	\$322,118	5.5%
Debt Services	\$200,025	3.3%
Federal/State Grants	\$169,974	2.8%
Business/Support Services	\$112,600	1.9%
Capital Outlay	\$18,800	3%

The total 2003-2004 budget is \$5,882,073. The Pie Graph above details all budget allocations.

DISTRICT'S GOALS

- Improvement of Student Achievement
- Hire and Retain High Quality Staff
- Infusion of Technology
- Updating of Policies
- Curriculum Renewal
- Improve Literacy Achievement on Terra Nova
- Improve Mathematics Achievement on GEPA

NEW JERSEY COMPARATIVE SPENDING REPORT

Average Cost Per Pupil 2002-2003

Alloway \$7,038

State Average (K-8)** \$8,824

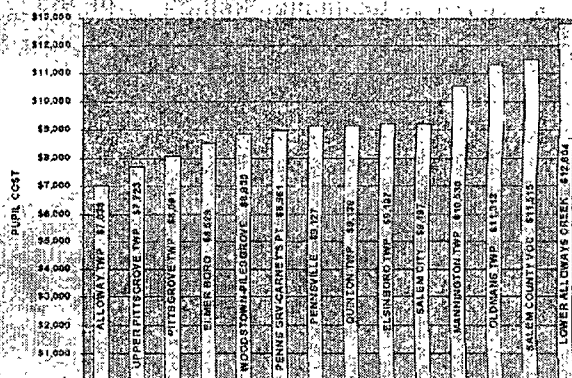
* Of the 63 school districts of our size, Alloway ranked 2nd in efficiency.

** This is the average of the 63 K-8 districts with enrollments of 401-750 students.

Alloway spends \$1,786/pupil LESS than the State Average.

WE ARE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE T&E BOX!Max. Expenditure Allowed
\$8,728Alloway Township
School District
\$8,298Minimum Expenditure Allowed
\$7,897

We are \$430 per student under the maximum allowable expenditure which adds up to \$263,573 below maximum allowed spending.

COST PER PUPIL IN SALEM COUNTY BY SCHOOL DISTRICT

TOTAL TAX LEVY INCREASE
(including debt service) 27 cents over the 2002-2003 budget, or an avg. increase of \$343.00 per household (\$124,800).

The overall budget increase for 2003-2004 will be 5.68% includes SGLAs

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Alloway Township School District is to provide all students with an equal opportunity to achieve excellence and reach their full potential as lifelong learners to meet challenges with courage, conviction, and confidence through quality programs and the dedication of committed, skilled teachers, administrators, and parents in collaboration with a small supportive community.

03-04 Tax Increase and Rate/\$100

District	Increase	Rate
Alloway	0.27	1.61
Cameys Point	0.16	1.82
Elmer	0.45	2.25
Ellsboro	0.23	1.89
Mannington	0.00	1.50
Oldmans	0.15	2.00
Pennsgrove	0.25	2.02
Pennsville	0.20	1.98
Pittsgrove	0.39	2.45
Quinton	0.12	1.65
Salem	0.00	1.61
Upper Pittsgrove	0.19	1.87
Pilesgrove	0.22	1.85
Woodstown	0.19	1.79

What Is A District's Budget?

• Financial plan to meet district's mission & goals and state-mandated Core Curriculum Content Standards.

• Provides the financial resources needed to achieve them.

Below is the school tax levy question that will appear on your ballot:

RESOLVED, that there should be raised for the General Fund \$2,712,470 for the ensuing school year 2003 - 2004.

A YES approves the school budget as presented.

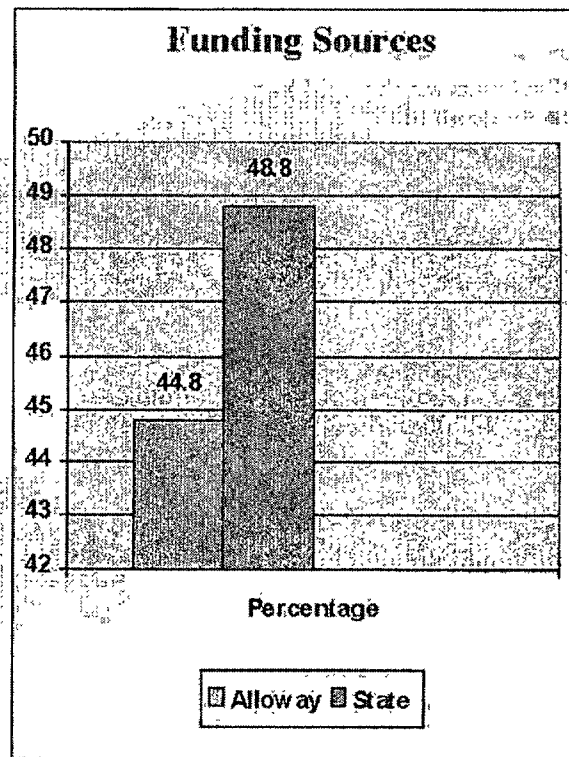
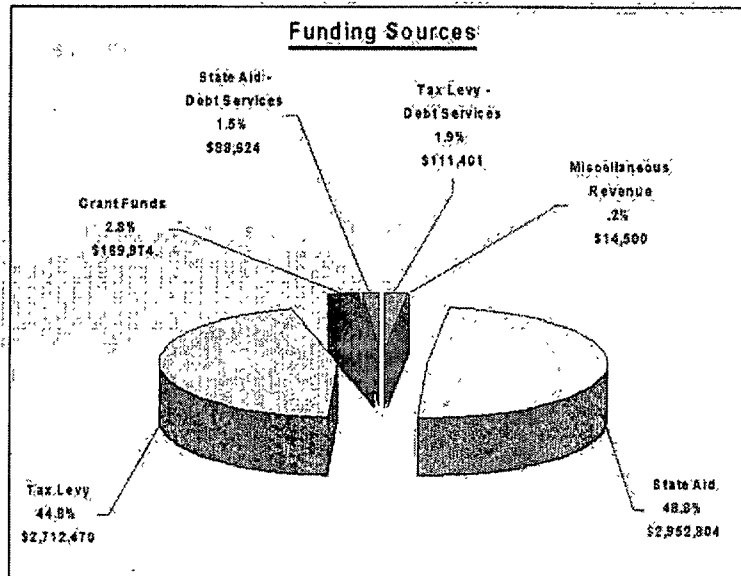
A No does not approve the budget as presented.

ALLOWAY INSTITUTES COST SAVINGS EFFORTS

Alloway recognizes it must tighten its belt in order to lessen the burden on the taxpayer. The following steps have been taken:

- Bulk Purchasing
- Tiered Transportation
- Quad-District In-Service
- Shared Service of the CST and in the Business Office

WHERE DOES IT ALL COME FROM?



Dear Fellow Community Members:

It is my hope that the information contained in this newsletter will help you understand your 2003-2004 school budget. The current fiscal crisis in New Jersey has impacted schools throughout the state. While our costs have gone up, and our enrollment has increased, the state has not increased their funding to schools since 2000. The result is greater pressure on the local tax levy to pay for your school system. Virtually every school district in Salem County, and across New Jersey, has had to raise taxes to pay for the state-mandated "thorough & efficient" education. Compounding the problem here in Alloway, your school district no longer has surplus available to keep the tax rate stable, as we have in years past.

Despite these problems, Alloway continues to be a great value for your tax dollar. Cuts have been made to get this proposed budget down to its current level. Bulk purchasing, tiered transportation and shared services with other school districts have made us more efficient. Your school district has the lowest cost per student in Salem County. Of the 63 school districts in New Jersey of similar size, Alloway ranks 2nd in cost per student. Even with the proposed tax increase of 27 cents, your school tax rate is still the 2nd lowest in Salem County.

I hope you agree that your school district provides an excellent education to our children, in spite of the financial crisis. We have a talented and caring professional staff that our children deserve. Please support your budget. VOTE on Tuesday, April 15, 2003.

Sincerely, Joseph J. Dyer, Jr., President
Alloway Board of Education

**Candidates running for a seat
on the Board of Education are:**

- Joseph Dyer, Jr., Incumbent
- Lawrence Rebbecchi, Jr., Incumbent
- Walter Leslie
- John Simpson

Thanks to a dedicated staff of Teachers, Administrators and Board of Education members, Alloway can be proud to be ranked 2nd in the State in efficiency of the 63 schools districts of similar size.

***Your Vote Makes
The Difference!***

*Our children and our school
programs are counting on you!*



Make your voice heard and
vote on Tuesday, April 15, 2003
at the Municipal Building from
2:00 - 9:00pm.

**ALLOWAY TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Joseph Dyer, Jr., President
Richard Morris, Jr., Vice President
Michael Clark
Sharon Coleman
Kathleen Johnson
Cyndy Keen
Douglas Lore
David Lounsbury
Lawrence Rebbecchi, Jr.

John A. Mazzei, Superintendent
Alloway Township School District
43 Cedar Street, PO Box 327
Alloway, New Jersey 08001
856.935.1622, ext. 312
Fax: 856.935.3017

Rebecca Joyce
Board Secretary/Business Administrator

APPENDIX B
SOCIAL BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Grade: _____

Age: _____

Vignettes from the Social Behavior Questionnaire

Directions: Read each situation and imagine that these situations happened to you. Answer the following two questions for each situation using a 5 point scale (1-not at all to 5-very much): a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with?

1. During class, a girl passes you a note that says: "No one wants to be your friend."
a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____
2. Four girls in your grade are talking about a movie they have just seen when you walk up to the group. The group sees you, stops talking, and turns away from you with their noses turned upward.
a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____
3. You hear two girls talking and they don't see you. One girl says: "I heard that she's going to the party with Alex-but I wanted to go with him. Let's tell everyone that she did something awful-then maybe he'll go with me instead." Then they see you and say: "Be quiet! Here she is now."
a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____
4. Your teacher says that she will be assigning partners for a class project. She tells you and another girl that you will be working together. The other girl looks at you, says "HER?", then rolls her eyes and makes a face.
a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____
5. You are playing with a hand-held video game when a girl comes over to you, stands with her arms crossed and says "I think your game is over now," and then glares at you.
a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____

6. During lunch, a group of girls are talking about the big party this Saturday. When you ask them if you're invited, they say: "You?! I don't *think* so." Then they start laughing and walk away.
- a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
- b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____
7. You are bouncing a ball when a girl comes over and hits you hard, then grabs the ball, saying: "I'm going to play with this now."
- a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
- b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____
8. Your teacher says that it's time to line up for lunch. As everyone is lining up, another girl says "I don't want to stand next to *you*!" and shoves you out of line.
- a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
- b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____
9. Two girls come over to you during lunch and one says: "I heard that you like Alex. Well, I like him, so you'd better not." Then they shove you backward.
- a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
- b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____
10. During lunch, a girl says "You stink!" and punches you in the arm.
- a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
- b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____
11. Four girls are talking in a group in the hallway. As you walk by them, they push and trip you.
- a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
- b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____
12. As you're leaving school one day, a group of girls gather around you, push you around, and say: "We're gonna beat you up!"
- a) How hurt would you be if this happened to you? _____
- b) How often does something like this happen in the group of people you hang around with? _____

APPENDIX C
MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT BULLYING

Grade: _____

Age: _____

Myths and Facts about Bullying

Directions: Determine whether each of the following statements is a “Myth” (M) or a “Fact” (F).

1. Bullies are boys. _____
2. Bullies are insecure and have low self-esteem. _____
3. Bullies don't have friends. _____
4. Bullies are usually failing in school. _____
5. Bullies are physically larger than their victims. _____
6. Bullies don't really mean to hurt their victims. _____
7. Bullies usually feel bad about their actions, but they just can't help themselves. _____
8. Looking different is the main reason children get bullied. _____
9. If the victim fights back, the bully will back down. _____
10. Telling on a bully will only make the situation worse for the victim. _____
11. Other children should stay away from the bully-victim situations or they'll get bullied as well. _____
12. All teachers can learn to handle a bully. _____
13. Unless you change a bully's home life, nothing will stop. _____
14. Bullies need therapy to stop bullying. _____
15. Bringing the parents of the victim and of the bully together for discussion will help. _____
16. Once a victim, always a victim. _____
17. Victims have usually brought the trouble upon themselves. _____
18. Learning disabled students are at higher risk of being victimized. _____

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APPENDIX D
OBSERVATIONAL CHECKLIST

Observation Checklist for "Girl's Group" Study

Directions: Please fill out this form each time that you meet with your group. If you feel that a question was not discussed in your meeting please note that in the comment section and skip the question. **Please feel free to discuss stories and issues that came out of your group's discussion but refrain from using any student names on any part of this checklist.** Thank you!

Teacher: _____

Session Number: _____

Number of students in group: _____

Number of 7th grade students: _____

Number of 8th grade students: _____

Number of students participating in discussion: _____

Comments:

Number of students listening but not volunteering to participate in discussion: _____

Comments:

Do you have a student who is exhibiting victim tendencies?: ☐yes ☐no

Comments:

Do you have a student who is exhibiting bullying tendencies?: ☐yes ☐no

Comments:

When students discuss bullying concerns are their situations examples of **covert aggression** or **overt aggression** (see list of definitions)? _____

Comments:

Do the students feel that they can report situations of bullying to teachers/administrators?

☐yes ☐no

Comments:

Information that you would like to share about your meeting:

APPENDIX E
PARENT LETTER AND PERMISSION FORM

October 20, 2003

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Hello! I hope that your daughter had a wonderful start to the 2003-2004 school year and is looking forward to a great school year.

This school year the 7th and 8th grade teachers would like to pilot a study group called "Girls Group." The purpose of this study is to address the topic of "bullying and adolescent girls" by forming small groups of 7th and 8th grade female students led by a teacher that will discuss the issue, increase their awareness of the problem, and dialogue ways to eliminate bullying in adolescent girls. A further intent of this project is for the development of new relationships between the participants of the study. Some of the activities that we plan to do during our meetings are: role-playing situations, creating an anti-bully pledge, and read and discuss the novel Star Girl by Jerry Spinelli.

The study will begin the week of October 20th and last 6 weeks. The students will meet once a week with their group after school for a 30 minute meeting. We will be providing snacks for our meetings. Since there will be more than one group meeting, we are available to have group meetings after school on Monday-Thursday. When you fill out the consent form please indicate your top two choices of meeting days so that your daughter may be placed in a group that meets on one of those days.

In addition to running this program, I will also be using the results of the surveys and meetings in my master's thesis. **Your child's name will not be mentioned in my study but any information that I gather during the study will be part of my thesis paper.**

If you would like your child to be part of this pilot program and approve the use of data collected during the study in my paper, then please sign and return the attached consent form.

The topic of bullying is sensitive and might introduce feelings that your daughter may want to discuss with a counselor. Should this occur please feel free to contact Mrs. Meggin Wentzell, the school guidance counselor at 856-935-1622. She is part of the study and will be more than willing to discuss bullying issues with your daughter on a one to one basis. If you have any questions about this study or would like to review data collection instruments please contact me at 856-935-1622 x121. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Susanne R. Wooton
Administrative Intern

Consent to Participate in "Girl's Group" Study

The purpose of this study is for students and teachers to formulate ways to deal with bullying between adolescent girls. Data for this study will be collected through surveys and observations. **All data are confidential, unless required otherwise by law, and all personal identifying information will be withheld.** No risks are involved for participants and participation is voluntary. Participants may withdraw at any time during the study. Any questions regarding this study may be directed to Miss Wooton at (856)-935-1622 x 121.

After reading the above statement, I do consent to allow my daughter to participate in this study.

Student's Name _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Date _____

Please indicate the 2 days that would be best for you child to stay after school. Your daughter will be placed in a study group that meets on one of the two days.

Note: You are responsible for providing transportation for your child.

____ Monday

____ Tuesday

____ Wednesday

____ Thursday

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one for your records and return the other to Miss Wooton. Thank you.

Consent to Participate in "Girl's Group" Study

The purpose of this study is for students and teachers to formulate ways to deal with bullying between adolescent girls. Data for this study will be collected through surveys and observations. **All data are confidential, unless required otherwise by law, and all personal identifying information will be withheld.** No risks are involved for participants and participation is voluntary. Participants may withdraw at any time during the study. Any questions regarding this study may be directed to Miss Wooton at (856)-935-1622 x 121.

After reading the above statement, I do consent to participate in this study.

Signature of the Participant (student) _____

Date _____

Signature of the investigator (Miss Wooton) _____

Date (Miss Wooton) _____

