MINIMIZING FEMALE BULLYING IN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH

ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this action research project report was to reduce female bullying in the school. There were 35 female participants from sixth and seventh grade, one counselor, and eight recess supervisors. This research project took place from September 4, 2007 through December 14, 2007.

Some of the behaviors associated with this problem included: name calling, teasing, exclusion from peer groups, and gossiping. The evidence was documented through the use of a student survey, counselor survey, and a lunch/recess observation checklist. The tools that were used addressed the roles of bully, victim, and witness in bullying situations. The data gathered from the student survey indicated that more than 50% of students had experienced bullying. The counselor survey responses stressed the occurrence of bullying in less structured environments such as, lunch/recess, playgrounds and physical education classes. The third tool, the lunch/recess observation checklist supported the counselor responses by indicating that more than half of the students experienced some type of bullying behavior during their lunch/ recess time.

The intervention strategy chosen for this project was a focus group. In this group the teacher researchers used various intervention strategies to address the behaviors of the bully and the victim. Positive social interaction should be reinforced through role-playing, literature, writing, and various other assignments (Davies, 2003). To reinforce these positive social interactions during the focus group the girls participated in role-playing, journal writing, open discussions, and team building activities. Watching a movie that illustrates bullying such as *Odd Girl Out* is a good choice that can easily be applied to schools (Rosevear & Logan, 2007). The teacher researchers chose to include this movie for viewing during the focus group.

The surveys that were given to students, counselors, and recess supervisors helped the teacher researchers to realize the seriousness of bullying, and that it cannot be ignored or brushed off as typical middle school behavior. The number of incidents increased in all categories except those who experienced bullying 3-4 times from pre- to post documentation. The positive social interactions that were created within the focus group indicated that if students are given "tools" to handle bullying situations they feel empowered. This empowerment seems to give them strength, as well as send a signal to the bully that their actions will not be tolerated.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The focus of this action research project was female bullying. Some of the behaviors associated with this problem included: name calling, teasing, exclusion from peer groups, and gossiping. The three tools that were used in this project to document evidence of this problem were student surveys, counselor surveys, and observation checklists.

Immediate Context of the Problem

Two teacher researchers conducted this action research project at one site. The site is an elementary school from which 6th and 7th grade classes participated. The demographic information of this site and district follows, and was retrieved from the Illinois School Report Card 2005. The school used in the research project is the only school in the district. Refer to Table 1 below and note that the majority (60.6%) of the students were Caucasian. However, the Asian/Pacific Islander population was notably higher than the state.

Table 1

Total Enrollment and Racial/Ethnic Background by Percentage

	Total Enrollment	Caucasian	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	African American	Native American
School/District	617	60.6	8.1	29.3	1.9	0.0
State	2,062,912	56.7	18.3	3.7	20.3	0.2

The Illinois School Report Card, 2005, states that 10% of the children were classified as low income. According to the Illinois School Report Card, "Low-income students come from families receiving public aid; live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children; are supported in foster homes with public funds; or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price

lunches" (p.1). This school's low-income population of 10% is much lower than the state

average of 40%. The school report also showed Limited-English-proficiency level at 11.5%,

which was above the state average of 6.6%. According to the Illinois School Report Card,

"limited-English-proficient students are those students eligible for transitional bilingual

programs" (p. 1). At the researched site, the student gender ratio male to female is 313:283

(Superintendent, personal communication, December 13, 2006).

The overall attendance rate for students was 94.7% compared to the state average of

93.9%. This school's truancy rate was 0.0%, 2.2% lower than the state rate. According to the

Illinois School Report Card, "Chronic truants are students who are absence from school without

valid cause for eighteen or more of the last 180 school days. The mobility rate was 5.1%,

compared to 16.1% for the state. According to the Illinois School Report Card, "Mobility rate is

based on the number of times students enroll in or leave a school during the school year" (p. 1).

Table 2 shows that the majority (97.9%) of the 47 teachers in the district are Caucasian,

while only 60.6% of the student body is Caucasian. In addition, the table shows that the state has

a higher percentage of Hispanic and African American teachers (Illinois School Report Card,

2005).

Table 2

Total Number and Teacher's Ethnicity by Percentage

	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American
School/District	97.9	0.0	0.0	2.1	0.0
State	84.3	9.9	4.5	1.2	0.2

The school district employs a total of 47 teachers, 93.6% (n=44) are female and 6.4%

(n=3) are male. The average teaching experience in this district is 13.1 years. Of the 47 teachers

working in the district, 23.3% (n=11) have earned bachelor's degrees and 76.7% (n=36) have earned master's degrees or above. The average teacher salary in the district is $62,122 as compared to the state's average salary, which is $55, 558. The targeted school's student-to-staff ratios are 14.6:1, as compared to the state which is 18.9:1. The pupil/administrator ratio at the targeted site is 205.7:1. The average class size for the grade targeted in this research project is 22 students.

The time devoted to teaching core subjects at the targeted school was very similar to the state except for some subjects at the following grade levels. In mathematics at the sixth and eighth grade level the state spent an average of 10 minutes more than the targeted school. In English/language arts at grade six the targeted school spent 16 more minutes daily, however at the eighth grade level the state time spent daily in this subject was 13 minutes.

Table 3

Time Devoted to Teaching Core Subjects (Minutes Per Day)

	Mathematics		English/Language Arts	
Grades	6	8	6	8
School/District	40	40	120	80
State	52	50	104	93

The overall Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) Performance for the targeted school at 85.2% was notably higher than the state's 68.9%. The overall Illinois Measure of Annual Growth In English (IMAGE) Performance for the targeted school at 56.8% was slightly higher than the state's 49.3%. However, the most notable change in test scores was at the state level where an increase of 20% occurred from the 2003-2004 to the 2004-2005 school year.

The administrative staff included one superintendent and two principals. A staff that consists of one business manager, one assistant to the superintendent, and one bookkeeper

assisted the superintendent. Two secretaries assisted the principals. The school staff consisted of 55 full-time certified staff members and 29 full-time non-certified support staff. The school's counseling staff included: one part-time psychologist, one social worker, and one counselor. There were three classrooms of each grade (kindergarten-eighth) at this site. Other staff members included teachers of a self-contained kindergarten classroom, a self-contained first grade classroom and a self-contained primary classroom. The self-contained kindergarten and first grade classrooms were part of a township consortium. These classrooms were housed at this site; however, the consortium employs the teachers. There were four resource teachers who assisted students in grades one through eight. This site also had a full-time speech teacher. The township consortium provided the services of a part-time occupational therapist. The English Language Learners (ELL) program consisted of one full-time coordinator, one full-time teacher, and two instructional associates. A reading recovery program, funded by Title I, had one instructor who provided assistance to first grade students. Students in grades two through four received assistance in reading through the Basic Skills program staffed by one instructor. The Spin Out (Gifted) program at this site had teachers for both reading and math (Superintendent, personal communication, December 13, 2006).

The Fine Arts program at this site had one band teacher, one orchestra teacher, one general music teacher, one full-time and one part-time art teacher. The technology and media centers were staffed by a full-time computer teacher and full-time librarian. Three full-time teachers and one part-time teacher staffed the physical education department. Life Skills had one full-time teacher (Superintendent, personal communication, December 13, 2006).

The maintenance, transportation, food service, and health service staffs had 15 employees. There was one director of maintenance and three full-time custodians. This site was

also maintained by a night-time cleaning crew that is hired from outside the school. The food service and transportation staffs at this site were employees of the school. This site prepares all of their own meals for the children and owns their own busses. The tasks of both these departments were shared by some employees in order to create full-time positions with insurance benefits. The staff for the food service consisted of one chief chef, one cook, and four kitchen aides. There were four bus drivers and four bus monitors. Health services were provided by one full-time school nurse (Superintendent, personal communication, December 13, 2006).

The site for this research project is one of nine elementary districts in a township. The students who graduate from this site most often attend the local township high school. The district has a substantial commercial base of over 250 businesses and is fortunate to have some of the lowest tax rates in Cook County (Superintendent, personal communication, December 13, 2006).

The students come from a diverse community in which over 30 languages are represented. The parents support the school in many ways including a strong and active PTA. The PTA contributes to the life and quality of the school with cultural arts programming, curriculum enhancements and a working relationship with the teachers and administration (Superintendent, personal communication, December 13, 2006).

The school day at this site is coordinated using two separate schedules; one for grades four through eight and another for kindergarten through grade three. This coordination provides the students with the opportunity to have the same quality teachers for fine arts, music, and physical education, providing continuity to the subject matter throughout the years. The students at this site participate in many extra-curricular activities and have excelled in competitions in both math and orchestra (Superintendent, personal communication, December 13, 2006). The

students at this site are housed in one building. The building was completely remodeled in 2000 with a two-story addition that has state of the art science laboratories, a mathematics technology laboratory, and team planning rooms for the teachers. A 10,000 square foot gymnasium, additional primary classrooms, and a "reading circle" for storytelling and reading activities were also added. This site also offers its students state-of-the-art computer laboratories, art rooms, a home economics (Life Skills) laboratory, an auditorium, and a multimedia library/learning center. Every classroom is equipped with at least one computer, cable TV and V.C.R. A portable cart which holds 26 lap-top computers is also available for classroom use (Superintendent, personal communication, December 13, 2006).

The school property lies adjacent to park district property which is shared with the school. The students have a playground, track, basketball courts, soccer fields, and tennis courts available to them, as well as a large, grassy area. The park district also offers the families who attend this school a program to provide before-school and after-school care for children in the primary and intermediate grades. This program operates each school day from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. (Superintendent, personal communication, December 13, 2006).

The site for this research project is what most would consider an ideal setting for children to learn and for teachers to teach. The children have many of the latest educational tools available to them and a well educated staff. Housing all grades, kindergarten through eighth, in one building creates a strong community atmosphere, however it also allows for some interesting dynamics as the children grow and develop. Many of the children are in school with the same group of children for nine years until their graduation. While the school does have a counseling staff that works to provide positive relationships among students, the nine years are not without obstacles.

Local Context of the Problem

The site is located in a northwest suburb of Illinois and is one of nine elementary districts in the township. The population of the village is 63,348. The village population is anticipated to increase to 64,678 by the year 2005. The age distribution of the village population is primarily people 18 years and older. Note that the site's Caucasian population at 60.6% is slightly lower than the village; however the Asian/Pacific Islander population at 29.3% is slightly higher than the Village (U.S. Census Bureau, *Quick Tables, Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics*, 2000).

Table 4

Demographic Characteristics

	Caucasian	Asian/Pacific Islander
School	60.6	29.3
Village	68.9	21.3

The median income of a household in the village is $57,375 with 10% of the population living below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, *Quick Tables, Profiles of Economic Characteristics*, 2000). In the population group 25 years and older, 87.4% have attained a high school diploma or higher. However, in the same group, 42.6% have attained a bachelor's degree or higher (U. S. Census Bureau, *Quick Tables, Profiles of Social Characteristics*, 2000).

The average household size in the village is 2.68 people, with the average family size being 3.2 people (U. S. Census Bureau, *Quick Tables, Profiles of General Characteristics*, 2000). The employment status of the population group 16 years and over is 59.3%, with unemployment at 2.5%. The majority of the employed population is in the management, professional, related occupations at 46.3%. Sales and office occupations account for 29.1% with

educational, health, and social services following at 24.5% (U. S. Census Bureau, *Quick Tables, Profiles of Economic Characteristics*, 2000).

According to the Cook County Crime Index Report the total crime index for the village has decreased 7.1% from the year 2004 to 2005. Arson has had the highest decrease in incidence of all types of crime at 33.3% (Illinois Data Website, 2005).

The village has a rich history. The first settlers were immigrants primarily from Germany and Luxembourg, who were seeking to relocate their families. The village was originally incorporated in 1888; however, due to confusion with having a similar name to a neighboring village the community renamed the village on November 15, 1940. Over the years the village has experienced a remarkable population, cultural, and commercial growth. The village population grew so rapidly that at one point it became known as "The World's Largest Village". This was partly due to a real estate boom that continued until the Great Depression. Following World War II the village's single family home construction thrived as the population doubled between 1940 and 1950 (Illinois History, 2005).

Due to these strong roots the village has continued to prosper. Village leaders developed a comprehensive plan for directing future land use and services. This plan, which was approved in 2005, focuses on addressing the needs of changing population, redevelopment, housing, transportation and community services. Some examples of this include improvements to the train station, increased bicycle routes, paths and bicycle parking facilities, streetscaping, road resurfacing and several major road improvement projects (Illinois Community Development, 2005).

With the growing population of the village the park district has strived to improve opportunities for the members of the village to have places for leisure activities. At present the

village has 49 parks totally more than 248 acres, two community centers, cultural center, childcare facility, indoor ice rink, driving range, golf course, two water parks, indoor children's playground, nature center and thousands of special events, sports and entertaining programs (Illinois Parks, 2005).

The mission statement of the district is as follows: "This school district is dedicated to providing a safe and caring educational environment where parents, teachers and administrators will work in partnership with the community in preparing our students to become productive citizens in our multicultural world." (Superintendent, personal communication, December 13, 2006).

The site for our action research project is the only school in the district. The district has one superintendent. While only 1.9 square miles in area, the district has a substantial commercial base with over 250 businesses. This allows the district to have one of the lowest tax rates in Cook County (Superintendent, personal communication, January 8, 2007). In 2002 the total school tax rate per $100.00 of assessed valuation was $1.61. The instructional expenditure per pupil for the 2003-2004 school year was fairly equal to the state expenditure; however, the operating expenditure for this same year was almost $3000.00 greater than the state. The district has passed two referendums in the past ten years. The first, in 1998 was a Building Bond Referendum used solely for the construction of an addition to the school that was completed in 2000. The second referendum passed in 2004. This was an Educational Fund Referendum, used for salaries, textbooks and educational programs (Business Manager, personal communication, January 8, 2007).

Every classroom at this site is equipped with at least one computer. A computer laboratory adjacent to the media center has 29 computers (Technology Coordinator, personal communication, January 8, 2007). A portable cart which holds 26 lap-top computers is also available for classroom use.

The research stated that lower socioeconomic circumstances can lead to a stress on parenting and marital/family relations. This in turn can cause greater aggression in children (McNeilly-Choque, Hart, Craig, Robinson, Clyde, Nelson, Olsen 1996). Parenting has been found to influence aggression in children. Inconsistent parental supervision, harsh punishments, failure to set limits and reward pro-social behavior as well as a coercive style of parent-child interaction can lead to more aggressive behavior in children (Hart, DeWolf, & Burts, 1992; McFayden-Ketchum, Bates, Dodge, and Petit, 1996).

<div style="text-align:center">National Context of the Problem</div>

Approximately 7 million teens are either bullies, victims of bullies, or both. Bullying is largely a learned behavior (Adams, 2006). Bullying may be the most prevalent form of violence in schools (Batsche, 2004, as cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Physical bullying has received the most attention because of the concern for violence in our schools. Less attention has been given to indirect/relational bullying because it has been viewed as less harmful or is excused as normal behavior (Harachi, Catalano, & Hawkins, 1999, as cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Evidence of the Problem

The purpose of this research was to reduce female bullying in the school. There were 35 female participants from sixth and seventh grade, one counselor, and eight recess supervisors. The evidence was documented through the use of a student survey, counselor survey and a lunch/recess observation checklist. This research project took place from September 4, 2007 through December 14, 2007.

Student Survey

The purpose of the student survey was to gather information on the frequency and types of bullying at the research site. The survey was distributed to 35 sixth and seventh grade girls, with 100% return rate. Completion of the survey occurred at the beginning of the girls' physical education class on September 4th, 2007. The girls who were participating in the research group were asked to report to a designated area of the gymnasium to complete the survey. The students had 15 minutes to complete the survey and place it in a manila envelope when completed. The survey was completed anonymously. The students were then allowed to return to their regular class activities.

The survey consisted of 12 questions. The questions were designed to indicate the three roles that are typically observed in a bullying incident, that of bully, victim, and witness. Each role had four questions pertaining to its designation. The students chose from four possible answers for each question: never, 1-2 times, 3-4 times and 5 or more times. Refer to Appendix A for a copy of the student survey.

The first four questions of the survey addressed the role of a victim in bullying situations. The questions referred to situations that may have occurred during the first two weeks of the school year.
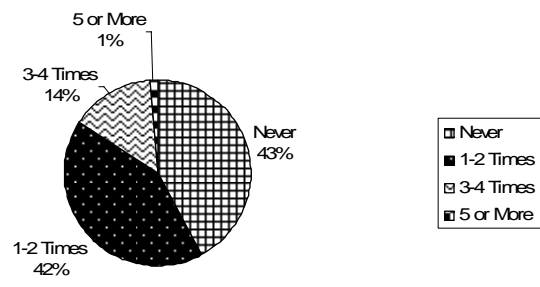

Figure 1: *Percentage of Victims in Bullying Situations (n=35)*

The data in Figure 1 indicates that of the survey participants 57% (n=20) experience bullying in the first two weeks of school which was August 28, 2007 through September 11, 2007.

The next four questions of the survey addressed the role of a witness in bullying situations. The questions referred to situations that may have occurred during the first two weeks of the school year, which was August 28, 2007 through September 11, 2007.
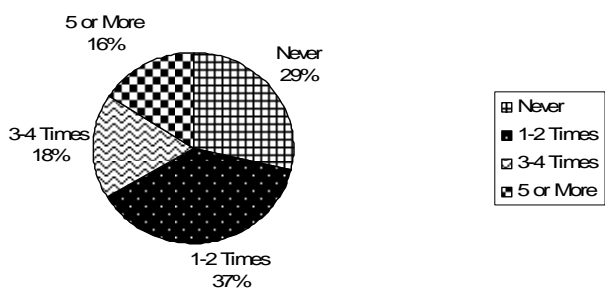

Figure 2: *Percentage of Witnesses in Bullying Situations (n=35)*

The data in Figure 2 indicates that of the survey participants 71% (n=25) witness bullying in the first two weeks of school.

The next four questions of the survey addressed the role of a bully in bullying situations. The questions referred to situations that may have occurred during the first two weeks of the school year, which was August 28, 2007 through September 11, 2007.
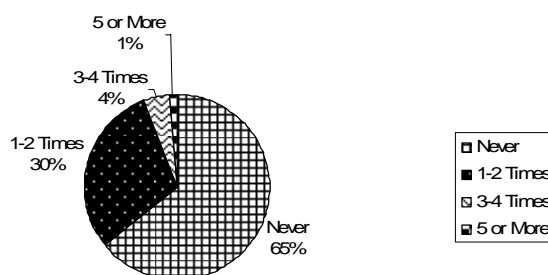

Figure 3: *Percentage of Bullies in Bullying Situations (n=35)*

The data in Figure 3 indicates that of the survey participants 35% (n=12) were bullies in the first two weeks of school.

Counselor Survey

The purpose of the counselor survey was to gather information on the frequency of bullying incidents which the counselor had to address. The survey was distributed to one counselor, on September 10, 2007. The survey was completed and returned on September 14, 2007. It was placed in a manila envelope and returned to the interoffice mailbox. The survey consisted of seven questions. The first three questions addressed the frequency of student experiences as bully, victim, or witness that were reported to the counselor. Question four requested information concerning intervention strategies that the counselor has found to decrease bullying. The fifth question asked the counselor what they felt was the impact of bullying on students. Question six addressed any patterns that the counselor may have observed in the

incidences of bullying. For example, who was involved, where it was occurring and the reason for the bullying. The final question asked the counselor for any additional comments or information that may benefit the research. Refer to Appendix B for a copy of the counselor survey.

In reviewing the responses to questions one through three of the survey, the counselor only needed to intervene on behalf of a victim on two occasions during the first two weeks of school. There were no incidents of intervention by the counselor concerning a bully or bystander.

In question four, the counselor pointed to specific intervention strategies that have been successful which included: positive skill building activities, conflict resolution programs (i.e. Let's Talk It), girls' groups, bullying programs (i.e. Quit It), and the Second Step Violence Prevention Program.

Question five addressed the impact of bullying on student behaviors. The counselor responded that this impact included low self-esteem, avoidance, and refusal to attend school, social withdrawal, and sometimes using bullying as retaliation.

The counselor noted several patterns in the incidents of bullying in the response to question six. According to the counselor, bullying incidents occur more often in less structured environments such as: playgrounds, lunch rooms, hallways, and physical education classes. Also, the counselor pointed out that bullying incidents are more common in certain grade levels of students.

The final question asked the counselor for any additional comments that might be beneficial to the research. The counselor noted that the timeframe between the beginning of the school and completion of this survey was only a two week period. It was suggested that this limited timeframe might skew the data regarding the occurrence of incidents of bullying.

Observation Log

The purpose of the observation log was to gather information on the frequency and types of bullying observed by lunch recess supervisors in the cafeteria and recess play area. The documentation was recorded daily during the sixth and seventh grade lunch periods between the weeks of September 17, 2007 through September 28, 2007 by four lunch/recess supervisors for a total of 7.5 total hours of observation. The supervisors completed the log and returned it on September 28, 2007 to the teacher researchers' mailboxes.

The observation log consisted of five categories of bullying: teasing, name calling, exclusion from groups, gossip/rumors, and physical harm. The recess supervisors were asked to tally the number of incidents of these behaviors they observed daily. Refer to appendix C for a copy of the Observation Log.
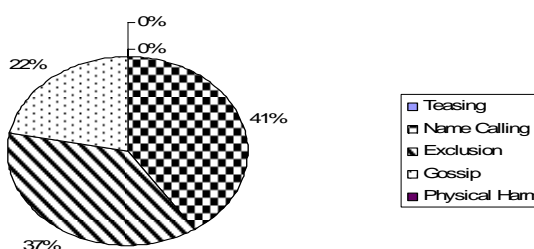
Figure 4: *Percentage of Types of Bullying*

The data in Figure 4 indicates that the majority of bullying that took place during the lunch/recess period was 41% (n=13) for name calling, 38% (n=12) for exclusion, and 21% (n=7) for gossip.

Reflection

According to the data collected we feel that bullying is an issue and should be addressed in our school. Through investigating information about bullying we have learned of the three main roles that children play in bullying situations. These roles of victim, bully, and witness all

were apparent within our student body. While the majority of our students were not bullies or victims but rather witnesses to this issue (Figure 2), we believe it is still a pressing problem. The impact of bullying on children, which was addressed in our research, was also expressed through the counselor's responses in the survey.

The responses in the counselor survey and observation log reinforced the research data we compiled which indicated that bullying occurs more often in less structured environments (Figure 4) where there is minimal supervision. The responses also seem to reinforce the idea that bullying occurs more frequently in particular grade levels.

Our research data indicates to us as teachers that there is a need for the entire school community to be educated about bullying. As teachers we need to be aware of the effects of bullying on all students, and work to create a school climate of zero tolerance for bullying. Students need to take an active role in reducing the incidents of bullying by assuming responsibility for their actions.

In closing, the data gathered supported our research. Bullying is an issue that needs to be addressed at our school. Policies need to be created to attend to the needs of all children involved whether they are the bully, victim, or bystander.

<div align="center">Probable Causes</div>

Bullying is defined as any behavior that causes physical or mental harm to another person (Davies, 2003). It affects 30% of teens in the United States. Approximately seven million teens are either bullies, victims of bullies, or both (Adams, 2006). Bullying may be the most prevalent form of violence in schools and affect the greatest number of students (Batsche, 2002 as cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). The bully/victim population is larger than the population of the pure bully group which is children who are always bullies and never become victims (Austin &

Joseph, 1996; Wolke & Stanford, 1999; Wolke, Woods, Schulz, & Stanford, 2000 as cited in Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt 2000). This harm occurs as children are repeatedly and over time exposed to negative consequences by one or more peers with the intent to hurt (Archer & Coyne, 2005).

Bullies can be male or female, come in all shapes and sizes, and are often smart and popular. They engage in bullying because it is the cool thing to do (Smith, n.d.), and making fun of someone else makes their status higher in a group (O'Hanlon, 2006). Girls tend to bully using indirect methods of aggression such as rumors and exclusion/while boys tend to use physical aggression (Adams, 2006). Whether male or female, bullying is largely learned by modeling their friends at school (Adams, 2006). This modeling takes place as the majority of students in bullying incidents are bystanders (Carney, 2006). They seem to derive satisfaction from the reaction of bystanders when they bully someone (Adams, 2006), and once a victim shows weakness to the bully they will continue to be harassed (Kalman, 2006).

One problem in research is that the definition of bullying (overt, social, and relational) varies from study to study (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999, Smith 2004, Stein, 2001 as cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Overt bullying refers to physical aggression directed to others that includes behaviors such as kicking, hitting, pushing, or threatening to engage in these acts (Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997 as cited in Curtner-Smith, Culp, Culp, Scheib, Owens, Tilley, et al. 2006).

Social aggression includes behaviors that attempt to damage one's self esteem or social status. They include negative facial expressions and gestures, rumors and social exclusion (Phillipsen, Deptula, & Cohen, 1999). Groups of students may gang up against others to use this form of aggression to establish social ranks and power (Mullin-Rindler, 2003). In middle school,

where belonging to a group is essential, social aggression becomes more complex, emerging as social exclusion, gossip, and friendship manipulation (Underwood, 2003). Social aggression is more detrimental to girls than boys because it harms what they value most, close friendships (Underwood, 2003). One reason for engaging in social aggression is to relieve boredom. Teen girls in North America spend 2.5 hours per day in conversation with friends which can be an avenue for the use of social aggression (Underwood, 2003). Bullying has gone high-tech. Twenty-five percent of girls in middle schools have been targeted at least once in a two month period by hurtful emails, text messages or slander-filled Web pages. This type of social aggression is known as cyberbullying (Adams, 2006).

Crick and Grotpeter introduced the term relational aggression in 1995 (Merrell, Buchanan, & Tran, 2006). Relational aggression is defined as the use of relationships to hurt and manipulate others (Knudsen, n.d.). Relational aggression accounts for most of the bullying done by both boys and girls (Olweus, 1994 and 2001 as cited in Mullin-Rindler, 2003). Regardless of the gender of the aggressor a certain social rank is required for relational aggression to be affective (Rose, Swenson, & Waller, 2004, as cited in Merrell, et al., 2006). Relational bullying becomes the preferred type of bullying during adolescence (Woods & Wolke, 2003). Boys are more likely to pair relational and physical aggression together and to advance to more serious forms of violence (Mullin-Rindler, 2003). Relation slights have been identified as a significant contributing factor in physically aggressive episodes in schools such as the 1999 shootings in Littleton, Colorado. The perpetrators had carefully planned to attack those that had ostracized them (Johnson & Brooke, 1999 as cited in Young, Boye, & Nelson, 2006).

Relationally aggressive behavior can be difficult to observe because the idea on intent to harm is not always obvious (Merrell, et al., 2006). One reason that relational aggression is often

overlooked is because adults accept it as "just the way students are," especially during the teen

years (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003, Underwood et al., 2001, as cited in Young, et al., 2006).

Although relational aggression is less visible by outsiders it is equally as damaging as other

forms of aggression (Merrell, et al., 2006).

Gender differences in the use of indirect/relational aggression only become obvious in

the teen years (Owens, Shute, & Slee 2000). Girls are more likely than boys to be a part of

relationally aggressive groups (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Girls may experience more relational

aggression than boys because of the importance that girls place on social relationships as

compared to boys. Girls invest a tremendous amount of time and energy in social comparisons

and peer acceptance (Gilligan, 1982; Harter, 1990; Steiner-Ardair, 1986 as cited in Casey-

Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001). Girls are supposed to be nurturing and sweet, which is

forcing then to express their aggression in covert ways (Vail, 2002).

Girls can be very mean (Underwood, 2003). Popularity is often associated with

meanness. Popular girls are often envied as girls with power (Currie, Deirdre, & Pomerantz,

2007). Society portrays a pecking order among females, where a girls gains status by talking

about and embarrassing others (Carney, 2007). Relationally aggressive girls use each other to

gain entrance into higher-ranking groups (Vail, 2002). Girls who use relational aggression are

not your "typical" bully. They are often smart, pretty, and well-liked by others (Burgess, n.d.).

Generally girl bullies travel in packs, with one girl being in charge of the group. She controls

who is in and out of the group, and how people are treated (Burgess, n.d.). This leader of the

pack is called the Queen Bee. The Queen Bee must expend energy to stay on top because other

girls are trying to topple her (Vail, 2002). Girls desperately want close relationships yet they use

them to hurt each other (Horn, 2004). Girls will use their strong desire for connectedness in

friendships as leverage against each other (Crothers, Field, & Kolbert, 2005). Girls live in a

world where best friends can become enemies overnight (Vail, 2002). Because girl's relational

aggression does not leave anyone physically hurt it is generally ignored. Girl's aggression is

escalating because of this ignorance (Burgess, n.d.).

Poor parenting skills have been found to influence aggression in children. Inconsistent

parental supervision, harsh punishments, failure to set limits and reward prosocial behavior, as

well as a coercive style of parent-child interaction can lead to more aggressive behavior in

children (Hart, DeWolf, & Burts, 1992, McFayden-Ketchum, Bates, Dodge, & Petit, 1996 as

cited in Merrell, et al., 2006). Mothers may encourage their daughter's use of relational

aggression because they feel it helps their daughter gain advantage over other girls (Burgess,

n.d.). The fathers of bullies often have been bullies themselves (Farrington, 1995 as cited in

Wolke, et al., 2000). Sibling interactions serve as model training grounds for learning social

behaviors and therefore may play a role in relational aggression (Azmitia & Hesser, 1993;

Patterson, 1982 as cited in Yoon, Barton, & Taiariol, 2004). Lower socioeconomic

circumstances can also lead to a stress on parenting and marital/family relations. This in turn can

cause greater aggression in these children (McNeilly-Choque, Hart, Robinson, Nelson, & Olsen,

1996). Parents blame teachers for ignoring bullying and teachers blame parents for raising

aggressive children (Kalman, 2006).

Lives are changed because of a bully's actions (Smith, n.d.). Researchers have long been

interested in the causes and effects of aggressive behavior in children (Parker & Asher, 1987 as

cited in Phillipsen, Deptula, & Cohen, 1999). Victims often have emotional and academic

difficulties, problems with social relationships, low self-esteem and increased risk of depression

(Hawker & Boulton, 2000 as cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Running away, refusal to attend

school and suicide have been linked to victimization from bullying (Elliot, 1992 as cited in Borg, 1998 as cited Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Girls are more susceptible to the effects of relational aggression and suffer high rates of absenteeism, anxiety and depression. They are also at risk for long term mental health issues including thought of suicide (Mullin-Rindler, 2003). Certain types of bullying set girls up to accept abusive behavior or stay in abusive relationships with men (Vail, 2002). Adults who suffered from bullying as children experience more depression, poorer self-esteem and have more difficulties with sexual relationships (Gillmartin, 1987 as cited in Wolke, et al., 2000). Wiseman, author of the book *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, has talked to women in their seventies who can remember the names of girls who tormented them years ago (Vail, 2002).

Middle school children believe that if they are only a bystander to aggressive behaviors they have no responsibility (Rosevear & Logan, 2007). The passive participation of a bystander minimizes their own guilt for allowing the incident to occur and reduces their empathy for the victim (Mullin-Rindler, 2003).

Overtly aggressive children are more likely to be rejected by their peers than relationally aggressive children, however, relationally aggressive children report feelings of loneliness, more often that overtly aggressive children (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995 as cited in Philipsen, Deptula, & Cohen, 1999). Children who engage in social aggression are more likely to report feelings of loneliness, anxiety and depression. They may also be at greater risk for eating disorders and personality disorders as adults (Underwood, 2003). Relationally aggressive children were more disliked that other children and experience significant social problems (Coie et al., 1990 as cited in Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Relational bullies have difficulty forming friendships of their own. They view friends as a means to an end or a way of controlling others and gathering intelligence

(Crick & Grotpeter, 1995 as cited in Mullin-Rindler, 2003). Relationally aggressive girls are disliked more than most girls of the same age group. They exhibit higher levels of loneliness and depression and have a harder time creating and sustaining social and personal relationships (Crick, 1996 as cited in Davies, 2003). High levels of aggression during childhood including cruelty to others and bullying are related to higher levels of aggressive behavior during later years (Curtner-Smith, Culp, Culp, Scheib, Owens, Tilley, et al., 2006). Children identified as bullies by age eight are more likely to be convicted of a crime by age 24 and have serious criminal records by age 30 (Knudsen, n.d.).

Most bullying occurs in schools (Kasen, Berenson, Cohen, & Johnson, 2004 as cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Thousands of young people are harassed in schools each day (O'Hanlon, 2006). School psychologists have identified bullying as a key issue that children face in school (Murray-Close & Crick, 2006). The school setting is typically the first place where children have their first significant experience with navigating social roles, expectations and conflicts (Merrell, et al., 2006). Playgrounds and other non-classroom places appear to be the site of the majority of aggressive acts, probably because there is less adult supervision (Olweus, 1993 as cited in McNeilly-Choque, et al., 1996). The number of teachers present during recess is usually not sufficient to handle the number of bully/victim problems that occur (Olweus, 1993 as cited in Young, et al., 2006). Bullying creates a negative school environment (Roberts & Coursol, 1996 as cited in Casey-Cannon, et al., 2001). Students report that harassment behavior often goes unnoticed by teachers (O'Hanlon, 2006). Victims of bullying are less likely to feel safe in their school environment when they perceive their predicament as going unnoticed (Casey-Cannon et al., 2001, Yoon & Kerber, 2003 as cited in Yoon, et al., 2004). Studies have shown that middle school children believe that teachers and administrators do nothing to stop

bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Many teachers and administrators turn a blind eye to covert aggression because it does not necessarily disrupt the classroom or school (Vail, 2002). Teachers perceive relationally aggressive behaviors as less serious than verbal or physical aggression and are sometimes less likely to intervene (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000 as cited in Yoon, et al., 2004). When schools ignore and dismiss relational aggression as not serious and a normal part of growing up, victims believe that they cannot count on adults for protection or that the behaviors are acceptable (MacNeil & Newell, 2004 as cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Adults not taking relational aggression seriously is one of the biggest obstacles in addressing the issue (Steiner, 2002 as cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006).

Government and public pressure for schools to address the issue of bullying is increasing (Espelage & Swearer, 2003, Limder & Small, 2003, Walker, 2004 as cited in Murray-Close & Crick, 2006). Schools do not have adequate policies and procedures to address bullying (Simmons, 2002, as cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). School districts across the country have established policies against physical aggression and bullying, but few schools have policies against verbal bullying and other forms of indirect aggression (Mullin-Rindler, 2003). A higher incidence of relational bullying occurs at schools with detailed and comprehensive policies against bullying. This may be due to the fact that these policies address overt forms of bullying and fail to consider the problem of relational bullying (Woods & Wolke, 2003). The funding and training for bullying prevention programs is often not adequate to meet the needs of schools and address the problem adequately (Eslea & Smith, 1998 as cited in Woods & Wolke, 2003). Support for anti-bullying programs is limited and usually focuses on physical aggression not relational aggression (McDonald, Billingham, Conrad, Morgan, & Payton, 1997, Walker et al., 1998, as cited in Yoon, et al., 2004).

The relationship of anti-bullying programs/policies to relational aggression should be more closely studied to determine if these programs increase the incidents of relational bullying (Woods & Wolke, 2003). Very few programs that address relational aggression exist (Yoon, et al., 2004). Interest in relational aggression is on the rise. It is obvious that educators and mental health professionals need to better understand it (Merrell, et al., 2006). Researchers have only begun to address the issue of bullying even though it is not a new phenomenon (Espelage & Asidai, 2001; Hoover & Hazler, 1991 as cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006).

CHAPTER 3
THE SOLUTION STRATEGY
Review of the Literature

There are several ways to cope with and stop bullying: talk about it, avoid trouble, be confident, do not use force, and if you are bullied online, do not reply (Carney, 2006). Children are the only people who can stop bullying (Kalman, 2006). They need to realize that they do not deserve to be treated this way (Knudsen, n.d.). Children should report bullying situations (Adams, 2006). They should be encouraged to talk to someone such as a parent, older sibling, or a friend immediately regarding a bullying situation. Through talking about it, one can come up with a plan on what to do next time a situation like this occurs (Arnett, 2007).

Parents play an integral part in creating a climate in which bullying is unacceptable. They are also crucial in developing preventive strategies (Foster et al., 1990 as cited in Woods & Wolke, 2003) such as: modeling good behavior (Knudsen, n.d.) and being involved in promoting positive relationships between friends (Casey-Cannon, et al., 2001).

Beyond family, educators also play an important role in bullying intervention (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Teacher's insights regarding relationships between peers can be useful because they work directly with students on a day-to-day basis (Merrell, et al., 2006). Teachers and coaches should demonstrate appropriate behavior to make it a school-wide standard (Arnett, 2007). Classrooms should be structured to promote kindness, cooperation, and communication (Casey-Cannon, et al., 2001). Increasing supervision in classrooms and other student areas can decrease bullying situations (Casey-Cannon, et al., 2001). Allowing students to be involved in policymaking and rules may reduce bullying (Olweus, 1993; Smith and Sharp, 1994 as cited in Casey-Cannon, et al., 2001). By doing this children will be taught the importance of respecting all people for who they are (Knudsen, n.d.).

Recognizing that bullying is a serious problem, is the first step in creating successful anti-bullying programs (Adams, 2006). Many bullying programs work by attempting to create a school environment where bullies will not be rewarded or tolerated (Adams, 2006). Schools may have to make some changes in order to have successful bullying programs. Some of these changes may include: policies and procedures, staff development, bullying assessments, curriculum support and programming initiatives (Yoon, et al., 2004). Consultants may be needed to help develop an anti-bullying program that best suits the school's population. When a bullying program becomes widely accepted in a school population, it becomes more difficult for children to engage in bullying behaviors. School administrators, teachers, students, and parents need to work together to make these programs successful (Adams, 2006). Successful programs can cause some bullies to unlearn their behaviors (Adams, 2006).

Interventions must be developed to address the behaviors of the bully and the victim (Yoon, et al., 2004). Positive social interaction should be reinforced through role-playing, literature, writing, and various other assignments (Davies, 2003). Role-playing is used to describe the actions of bullies, victims, and bystanders (Dellasega, 2005). Some other successful strategies may include: allowing students to write their own definitions of bullying and expressing their feelings, (Rosevear & Logan, 2007), reading stories such as *My Secret Bully* aloud in class, (Knudsen, n.d.), and watching a movie that illustrates bullying. *Odd Girl Out* is a good choice, (Rosevear & Logan, 2007) and can easily be applied to what is going on in schools (Rosevear & Logan, 2007). Art can also provide an excellent opportunity for bridging thoughts and feelings with reality (Stepney, 2001, as cited in Dellasega, 2005).

Schools can provide meaningful activities during free time so students can overcome their preoccupation with being mean to others (Owens, et al., 2000). One idea is mentoring

programs that provide positive role models for youth (Dellasega, 2005) and help students to develop their own strategies for conflict resolution (Mullin-Rindler, 2003). These groups can help students to understand that conflicts are natural, and should be addressed with honest, open discussions, in order to resolve them (Davies, 2003). Encouraging involvement in various activities outside of school can allow children to interact with different groups of peers and improve their social skills (Mullin-Rindler, 2003). Activities must also be provided for the bully. They need to be shown how hurtful their behavior is; most do not realize it until it is brought to their attention (Burgess, n.d.). Counseling bullies individually rather than in groups is important to redirect their aggressive tendencies into power and leadership roles (Mullin-Rindler, 2003).

Without intervention the behavior does not subside (Vail, 2002). An effective intervention must address peer-group dynamics as well as individual behaviors (Young, et al., 2006). There are many intervention programs on a nationwide level. Some of these bullying intervention programs reduce incidences in schools by as much as 50 % (Adams, 2006). Interventions should promote social-emotional learning which is "the process of acquiring the skills to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, and handle challenging situations effectively" (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2005 as cited in Merrell, et al., 2006).

A well known intervention program called the *Ophelia Project*, founded by Wellman, is one of the first programs to name relational aggression and find ways to counteract it (Burgess, n.d.). The *Ophelia Project* works towards creating a healthier more positive environment for girls (Young, et al., 2006) by providing camps that address bullying (Hairston & Garst, 2004, as cited in Dellasega, 2005) These camps offer excellent opportunities for children to immerse

themselves in a peer relationship environment (Dellasega, 2005). The Camp Ophelia curriculum is based on a model of Educate, Relate, and Integrate (ERI) (Dellasega, 2005). Camp begins by defining what relational aggression is, who is involved, and why it happens (Dellasega, 2005). The girls at camp brainstorm a list of non-relationally aggressive choices available when dealing with aggressive situations (Dellasega, 2005).

The second part of camp encourages the girls to relate the information on relational aggression to their own life experiences, so the girls can share what roles they have played and how their behavior has affected others (Dellasega, 2005). Juniors and seniors in high school on a 1:5 ratio mentor all-girl groups at Camp Ophelia. These high school students have been through middle school yet it is still fresh in their minds so they have insights, which the campers can relate to. Adults who have a counseling background are present for support and guidance in facilitating small and large group activities (Dellasega, 2005). The art curriculum at camp includes a variety of mediums such as: writing, photography, drama, visual art, music, and pottery to help girls address issues with relational aggression (Dellasega, 2005).

The final part of camp is where the girls integrate their knowledge and action plan for the future. The campers present their art projects and role-plays to their families (Dellasega, 2005).

Another successful anti-bullying program is, The Empower Program, which concentrates on teaching young people leadership skills (Young, et al., 2006). Rosalind Wiseman, author of the book *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, founded the Empower Program (Burgess, n.d.). The difference between these two bully prevention programs is that the Empower Program uses a more confrontational approach between warring peers, an approach that has been criticized for teaching girls even more hurtful tricks. Whereas the *Ophelia Project,* works with younger girls to try and prevent relational aggression before it starts (Burgess, n.d.).

There are several other smaller anti-bullying programs; one is called Bullying Hurts! that was founded by Marvin Nash. The Bullying Hurts! Program helps students figure out what exactly bullying is and how it makes them feel. The program teams up high school students and younger students to combat bullying. Nash and his family train high school students so they can teach anti-bullying programs to elementary and middles school students. Bullying Hurts! emphasizes two tips for handling bullies: tell an adult and never resort to violence (Carney, 2006).

Social-skills training programs and character-education programs may help foster peer relationships. These programs might include qualities of a friend, ways to act as a good friend, and the importance of including other children (Young, et al., 2006). The Second Step, Middle School/Junior High program's goals are to foster students learning of pro-social skills and reduce impulsive-aggressive behavior (Van Schoiack-Edstrom, Frey, & Beland, 2002). The Owning Up program addresses the role of the bystander and includes interventions in trying to stop the aggressive behavior (Young, et al., 2006). Steve Leff designed a project called "Friend to Friend Project". This 16-week course involves young people, teachers, playground monitors, and parents (Ligouri, 2005). BullySafeUSA is a program developed by SueEllen Fried. This program offers a range of services that include student empowerment sessions, teacher and parent workshops and training sessions for school counselors, and administrators (Fried & Fried, 2003). "Don't Laugh at Me" (DLAM) project, founded by Peter Yarrow, provides curriculum for grades two through eight, summer camps and after school programs. This curriculum utilizes inspiring music and video as well as materials for conflict resolution (Fried & Fried, 2003). Get Connected is a program to reduce bullying and increase kindness among elementary and middle school students. "I Can Problem Solve" (ICPS) is a research based program that can be incorporated

into the classroom or used by mental health professionals. This program teaches children how to think, not what to think. Stick Up For Yourself! is a ten-part course in self-esteem and assertiveness for children. The program shows children how to stick up for themselves without putting others down or getting into trouble (Fried & Fried, 2003).

Regardless of the type of program that a school or community chooses, evaluation is necessary once interventions are implemented (Young, et al., 2006). Researchers need to continue to learn more about how/why these social processes unfold. Understanding this will help to create more successful intervention tools (Underwood, 2003).

<div align="center">Project Objective and Processing Statements</div>

As a result of focus groups and anti-bullying activities, during the period of September 4, 2007 through December 14, 2007, the students of teacher researcher A and B were to minimize bullying behaviors.

The following lists of tasks were completed prior to implementing the interventions. These lists helped the teacher researchers prepare for the project.

- Develop questions and activities for focus groups
- Select books and movies for discussion groups
- Develop skits for role-playing
- Develop stem questions for journaling
- Develop times and places for focus group meetings

<div align="center">Project Action Plan</div>

This plan outlines on a weekly basis the activities that were used in the research project.

Pre-week: Beginning August 28, 2007
- Distribute and collect parental consent forms

Pre-documentation

Week 1: Beginning September 4, 2007
- Administer student, counselor, and lunch/recess supervisor surveys and checklists.

- Notify lunch/recess supervisors of the names of any students who have not been given parental permission to participate
- Collect student and counselor surveys

Week 2: Beginning September 10, 2007
- Collect the lunch/recess supervisor checklist and the end of the week
- Assess the responses for the student and counselor surveys

Intervention

Week 3: Beginning September 17, 2007
- Define bullying and the different types in the Community Room
- Introduce the purpose and plan of focus groups

Week 4: Beginning September 24, 2007
- Review rules/procedures for focus groups
- Perform activity taken from bullying activity book
- Reflect in bullying journal

Week 5: Beginning October 1, 2007
- Talk about "I" statements and conflict resolution techniques
- Role-play skits on conflict resolution
- Reflect in bullying journal

Week 6: Beginning October 8, 2007
- Talk about and discuss roles in peer groups: Bully, victim, bystander
- Reflect in bullying journal

Week 7: Beginning October 15, 2007
- Start watching movie *Odd Girl Out*
- Reflect in bullying journal

Week 8: October 22, 2007
- Continue watching *Odd Girl Out*
- Reflect in bullying journal

Week 9: Beginning October 29, 2007
- Finish watching *Odd Girl Out*
- Discuss movie
- Reflect in bullying journal

Week 10: Beginning November 5, 2007
- Discuss and brainstorm positive responses to bullying
- Perform activity from bullying book *Ways to Handle Bullying*
- Reflect in bullying journal

Week 11: Beginning November 12, 2007
- Read excerpts from book *Queen Bees and Wanna Bees*
- Discuss feelings/opinions on book
- Reflect in bullying journal

Week 12: Beginning November 19, 2007
- Open discussion on current problems/situations
- Ideas from students on how to deal with these situations
- Reflect in bullying journal

Week 13: Beginning November 26, 2007
- Reflect on focus group: pros and cons
- Final reflection in journal

Post-Documentation

Week 14: Beginning December 3, 2007
- Distribute post-survey to students and post-observation checklist to counselors and lunch/recess supervisors.

Week 15: Beginning December 10, 2007
- Collect and compile final results from surveys and observation checklists

Methods of Assessment

The purpose of the 12-question student survey was to gather information on the frequency and types of bullying at our school after the interventions have taken place. During the week of December 3, 2007 the teacher researchers administered the student survey to the students in their respective classrooms. The 70 students were given 15 minutes at the beginning of each class to complete the survey. The results of this post-documentation survey were compared to the pre-documentation survey to note any changes in the frequency and types of bullying.

The purpose of the checklist was to identify the frequency of bullying among approximately 35 sixth graders and 35 seventh graders at Fairview South School as observed by lunch/recess supervisors. The checklist documented the frequency of bullying in the cafeteria and in the recess play area. The teacher researchers requested the assistance of the lunch/recess

supervisors to complete this observation log. This documentation was performed daily during the sixth and seventh grade lunch periods between the weeks of December 3, 2007 through December 14, 2007 by the lunch/recess supervisors. The results of this post-documentation checklist were compared to the pre-documentation checklist to note any changes in the frequency and types of bullying.

The purpose of the counselor survey was to gather information and insight as to the frequency and types of bullying at the site. During the week of December 3, 2007 the teacher researchers gave the school counselor a survey to fill out. The results of this post-documentation survey were compared to the pre-documentation survey to note any changes in the frequency and types of bullying.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to reduce female bullying in our school. Behaviors that define female bullying are name calling, exclusion from groups, gossiping and rumors. The interventions used were various anti-bullying activities from programs such as Bully Safe U.S.A. Approximately 35 students from sixth and seventh grade participated from September 4, 2007 through December 14, 2007.

Historical Description of the Intervention

During the first week of our intervention we presented the program to the sixth and seventh grade girls and sent home parental consent forms. The signed consent forms were collected. Copies of the pre-survey for both students and the counselor were made and plans for activities to be used in week two were discussed.

The girls seem interested in the project, which was reflected in the high return rate for the parental consent forms. However, it was disappointing to us that some girls who we felt would benefit the most from the program chose not to participate. We felt this lack of participation was perhaps due to the influence of the "Queen Bee" among the girls' social groups. We attempted to talk with some girls one on one in an attempt to encourage them to reconsider joining the project.

Week two we distributed and collected the counselor and student pre-survey, made arrangements to reserve a room, dates and time for the focus group. There were several scheduling conflicts in making these arrangements. It was decided that we would meet twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday during lunch/recess. We also contacted the cafeteria supervisors regarding the observation checklists. We received very positive feedback from faculty and staff toward our project.

The first focus group meeting took place in week three. The discussion began with the students creating rules for the group. These rules were displayed on a poster in our meeting area. This poster was signed by all of the girls as a symbol of their commitment to the program. Each girl was given a journal, which was used to express their thoughts and feelings from the groups' activities. The journals were stored by the teacher researchers and distributed each focus group to the girls. No names were placed on the journals to project anonymity. The girls decorated their journal cover so that they could easily identify their own. The girls enjoyed personalizing their journal.

During this meeting the group discussed some bullying facts and what they would hope to learn as being a part of the focus group. The girls had no trouble identifying the various roles that occur in bullying situations. Many girls gave examples of their experiences as either the bully, victim or bystander. The activity for the day was called "Same or Different". This gave the girls a chance to discuss similarities and differences among themselves. The meeting ended with an opportunity for the girls to journal about the day's activities.

One drawback to our meeting time was that it was necessary for us to meet during lunch/ recess. The time seemed to go by quickly because we had to allow for the students to eat as well as complete the focus group activities for the day. One interesting observation was the seating separation between the sixth and seventh grade girls in the focus group. It was also apparent who was going to attempt to dominate conversations and activities.

Week four started with a discussion of the "Respect for Differences" activity. In addition to this activity was a conversation about power and how it relates to bullying situations. The girls created a list to describe the personalities of the bully, victim and bystander. The girls are very willing to share their thoughts and feelings; however it seemed that the girls were getting a bit

restless and that we would need to engage them in an activity that would get them up and moving. We felt that this may be due to the fact that they were use to having this time for recess. Again the focus group ended with time for journaling. We explained to the girls that we would be reading their journal entries, because they would help us to better understand the group and plan for future activities.

During week five we took the girls to the gymnasium to do the activity called "Cross the Line". The goal of this activity was to help break down the barriers between children that perpetrate acts of unkindness. This activity required the girls to cross a line depending on their response to a question. The questions were very personal and addressed some sensitive issues. The girls did a nice job with this activity and their responses seemed sincere. The girls realized after doing this activity that others face many of the same feelings that they do. They also realized that showing your feelings takes courage and that others can be supportive of you when you do this.

Some of the girls in the group are still very quiet and don't actively participate in discussions. However, they keep coming each week so we feel that they are benefiting from the group activities.

The students created skits during week six. These skits dramatized bullying situations. The girls were given specific guidelines for their skits. One skit dramatized a bullying incident and the other a positive solution to an incident of bullying. The girls had great solutions to the bullying in their role play situations. On Tuesday of this week the seventh grade girls were on a field trip, which meant that we only had sixth graders present for focus group. There was a noticeable difference in the behavior of the sixth grade girls without the seventh grade girls being

present. They seemed to display more immature behavior, and when the seventh graders returned on Thursday their behavior changed.

We made some interesting observations during their skits. The dominate girls were most often playing the role of the bully. We questioned whether these girls may play this role in "real life" situations. When some of the more outspoken sixth grade girls were paired with outspoken seventh grade girls the sixth grader became less vocal. This focus group concluded with a journal entry to the question: "What do you feel are good solutions/responses to incidents of bullying".

During weeks seven through nine the group watched the movie "Odd Girl Out". The movie did an excellent job of addressing various types of bullying and the roles of bully, victim and bystander. The girls were able to relate to the characters in the movie. Many girls began to express their feeling aloud about various situations or characters in the movie. The students realized how severe the consequences of bullying can be for everyone involved, and the possibility that these situations can and do happen in real life. However, because this level of bullying has not yet been a part of their experiences here at school, we felt that some students may have found it hard to relate to.

During these three weeks we had one interesting incident involving girls from our focus group. Three girls were bullying one girl while another was a bystander. It was over teams in a soccer game. One girl was asked to switch teams so that the other three girls could be together on the same team. The girl refuse to switch and so the other girls began calling this girl names and making fun of her. The girl who was being victimized came to us and told us about the incident. We talked with all of the girls together and expressed our disappointment in their behavior in light of the discussions and activities that they were a part of in the focus group. This seemed to resolve the problem.

Weeks 10-12 had several interruptions to our focus group due to parent/teacher conferences and the Thanksgiving holiday. The girls worked on creating posters that depicted bullying prevention strategies. We chose the groups to allow for some control of the interaction between students and the quality of their work. The girls were excited about designing the posters and displaying them for their classmates. They had good ideas and were on target with their information regarding bullying. These posters were displayed in various places throughout the school building. The middle school principal commented on how nice the posters were and asked us if we would be interested in continuing with some type of activities regarding bullying after our project was complete.

Week 13 began with a story and discussion, the story was titled "The Gossiper" from the Chicken Soup series. The message of the story was how easily rumors can begin but yet how difficult they are to stop. The girls liked the story and seemed to understand its message. On Thursday of this week the girls watched a video titled "Cliques, Phonies, and Other Baloney" by Trevor Romain. We purchased this video at an educational workshop we attended. Our principal encouraged us to attend this workshop in light of our project on bullying. The video message was to encourage children to feel good about themselves and respect others.

During the final week, the student survey was completed as well as the counselor survey and recess supervisor checklist. We distributed a packet of information to each group member on dealing with relationships. Many of the topics were ones that we had covered in our focus group. The girls seemed to enjoy the focus group and the time it afforded them to discuss social issues that were important to them. Many of the girls requested that we continue with the focus group after winter break.

Our intervention for this project was a focus group. This group consisted of 35 sixth and seventh grade girls. The group met twice a week for 14 weeks from September 4, 2007 through December 14, 2007. The focus group was designed to allow the girls an opportunity to express their feelings about relationships and bullying while providing them with tools to handle social conflicts that they may experience.

We used a variety of activities to address the issue of bullying. Some of those activities were: discussion and role-playing exercises from the BullySafe USA program and from our school agenda book (See Appendix D), the videos "Odd Girl Out" and "Cliques, Phonies, and Other Baloney" (See Appendices E-F), the story the "Gossiper" taken from the Chicken Soup series (See Appendix G), a teambuilding activity called "Cross the Line" (See Appendix H), a student handout take from the book "Bullying in the Girl's World" by Diane Senn (See Appendix I).

Through the implementation of our focus group we have become more aware of the roles students play in bullying situations. It also sharpened our sense of observation to the many ways in which bullying is carried out by students. We find ourselves more in tune with the covert types of behaviors that are typical of relational aggression.

In our classrooms we are learning to address instances of bullying as soon as they arise so that we can prevent the escalation of the situation. We have learned that all students involved, whether they are the victim, bully, or bystander have significant feelings related to the situation. Acknowledging these feelings is an important part of resolving the situation.

Our focus group helped us to realize the seriousness of bullying, and that it cannot be ignored or brushed off as typical middle school behavior. We also found that if we give our

students "tools" to handle bullying situations they feel empowered. This empowerment seems to give them strength, as well as send a signal to the bully that their actions will not be tolerated.

<center>Presentation and Analysis of Results</center>

The purpose of this research was to reduce female bullying in the school. There were 35 female participants from sixth and seventh grade, one counselor, and eight recess supervisors. The evidence was documented through the use of a student survey, counselor survey and a lunch/recess observation checklist. This research project took place from September 4, 2007 through December 14, 2007.

The first four questions of the post-survey addressed the role of a victim in bullying situations. The questions referred to situations that may have occurred during the last month of the research intervention. During the post documentation survey researchers noted that 32% (n=11) of students have never been a victim in bully situations compared to 43% (n=14) in the pre-survey.

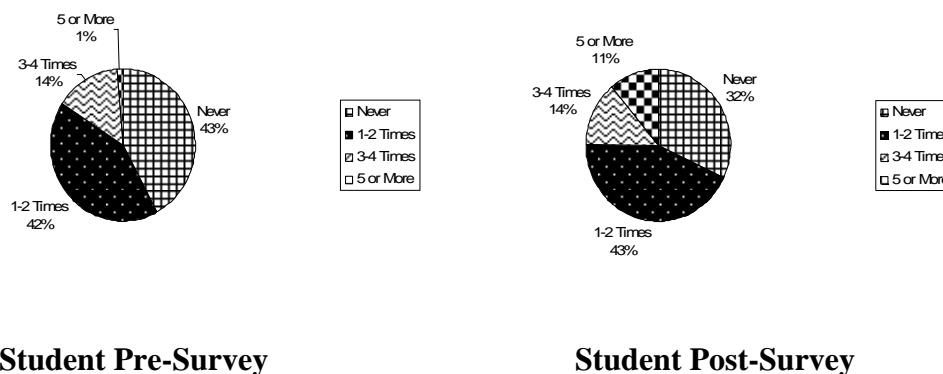**Student Pre-Survey**   **Student Post-Survey**

Figure 5: *Changes in Percentage of Victims in Bullying Situations (n=35)*

As summarized in figure 5 above, researchers observed from pre- to post documentation that the number of incidents of bullying has increased in all categories except for those who experienced bullying 3-4 times. The most significant change was that there was a 10% (n=4) increase in the number of students who experienced bullying five or more times.

The next four questions of the post-survey addressed the role of a witness in bullying situations. The questions referred to situations that may have occurred during the last month of the research intervention. Students who witnessed bullying incidents increased 3% (n=1) from the pre- to post survey.

Student Pre-Survey   **Student Post Survey**
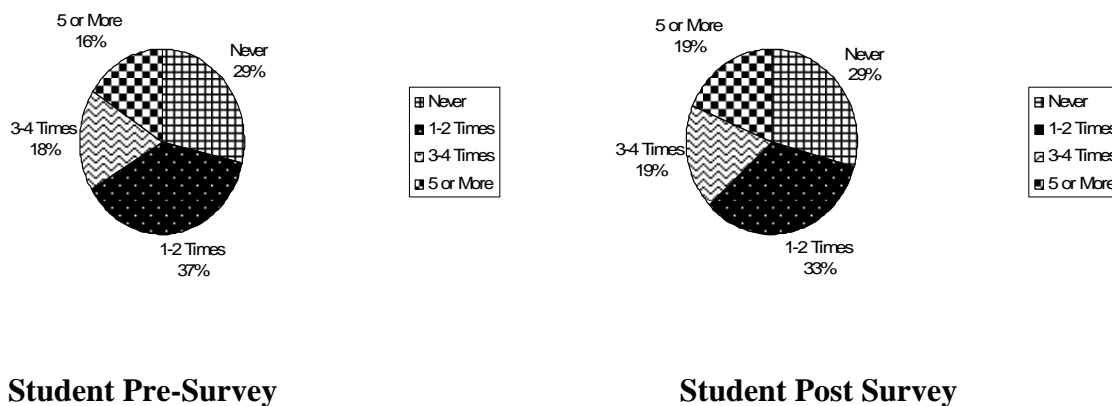
Figure 6: *Changes in Percentages of Witnesses in Bullying Situations*

As summarized in figure 6 above, researchers observed from pre- to post documentation that the number of witnesses to bullying has increased slightly in the category of "five or more" incidents.

The next four questions of the post-survey addressed the role of a bully in bullying situations. The questions referred to situations that may have occurred during the last month of the research intervention. The number of students who were bullies increased in all categories from the pre- to post survey.

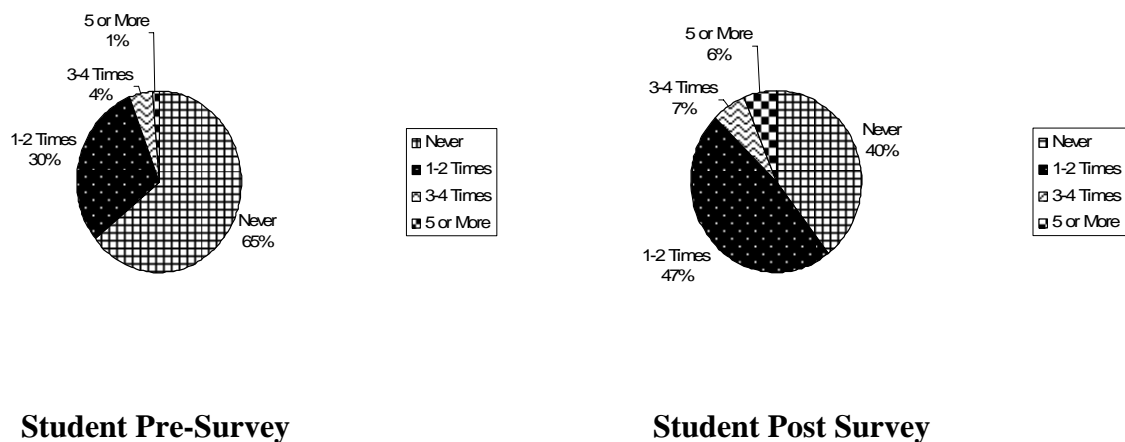| **Student Pre-Survey** | **Student Post Survey** |

Figure 7: *Changes in Percentages of Bullies in Bullying Situations*

As summarized in figure 7 above, researchers observed from pre- to post documentation that the number of bullies in bullying situations has increased in all categories with the most significant being a 25% (n=9) increase in the category of students who had "never" been bullies.

The purpose of the counselor survey was to gather information on the frequency of bully incidents which the counselor had to address during the last month of research intervention. The survey was distributed to one counselor on December 3, 2007. The survey was completed and returned on December 7, 2007.

The first three questions addressed the frequency of student experiences as bully, victim, or witness that were reported to the counselor. In the pre-survey, the counselor had reported few or no situations of bullying. When responding to the same questions in the post survey the counselor reported a significant increase in the incidents of bullying. Question four through six requested information concerning intervention strategies, impact of bullying on students, and patterns in the incidences of bullying. The counselor's responses were the same from the pre- to post survey for these questions. The final question asked the counselor for any additional comments or information that may benefit the research. There were no additional comments other than to offer the researchers support in their endeavors.

The final research tool was the observation log. The purpose of this log was to gather information on the frequency and types of bullying observed by lunch/recess supervisors in the cafeteria and recess play area during the last month of the research intervention. The observation log consisted of five categories of bullying: teasing, name calling, exclusion from groups, gossip/rumors, and physical harm. The recess supervisors were asked to tally the number of incidents of these behaviors they observed daily. During the post observation there was an increase in the number of bullying behaviors observed.
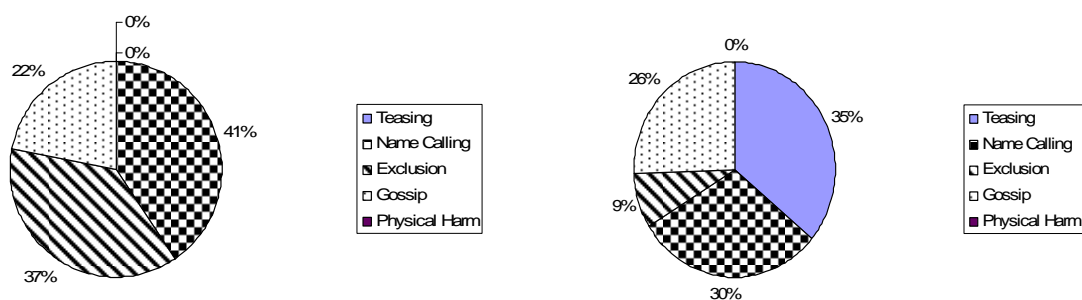
Pre-Observation Log   **Post Observation Log**

Figure 8: *Changes in Percentages of Types of Bullying*

As summarized in figure 8, of the five behaviors observed by the supervisors, teasing increased 36% (n=17) from the pre- to post data. This was the most noteworthy change of all the behaviors observed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In reviewing the data from our pre- and post student survey we noted the following changes. More children reported that they were victims of bullying in the post survey than those that had reported in the pre-survey. This increase was especially noted in situations where children experienced bullying five or more times. A second change noted was that more students witnessed bullying in the post survey. We believe this change was directly related to the fact that

there were more incidents of bullying. A final observation made, when reviewing the data from these surveys, was a 25% increase in the number of students who had exhibited bullying behaviors.

We feel that these changes may be attributed to a number of factors. The first being that the pre-survey was given after the students had only been in school for two weeks. This short period may have limited the amount of time for social interaction between students in which bullying may occur. Also, typically students tend to be better behaved early in the school year when they are excited about new classmates, classes, and teachers. We also feel that because of the relationships that were created in our focus group the students may have felt more comfortable expressing honest answers on the post survey. The focus group also helped to educate the students as to what constitutes bullying, giving them a broader perspective on their own behaviors.

In reviewing the data from the counselor survey we noted the following changes. There was a significant increase from the pre- to post counselor survey regarding incidents of bullying reported to the counselor. In the post survey the counselor noted that relational aggression which is more common in girls seems to be on the rise.

We feel that the number of incidents of bullying reported by the counselor may have increased due to the length of time in school compared to the pre-survey. For the pre-survey the students had only been in school two weeks whereas for the post survey it was several months. This extended time period allowed for more social interaction between the students which in turn may create a climate conducive to bullying. The fact that the counselor noted an increase in relational aggression among girls added substance to the premise of our project.

After reviewing our final observation tool, an observation log for lunch supervisors, we concluded once again that there was an increase in the incidents of bullying. As was noted before, we believe that this was due to the time allotted for observation for the pre-survey as compared to the post survey.

While our data would indicate that our intervention did little to reduce bullying, we feel our focus group had a positive impact on student behavior and relationships. These groups gave students an understanding that we as teachers are aware of bullying and are willing to listen and support them. The issues of bullying are something that society seems to accept as a "normal" part of middle school behavior. Our focus group gave students a time and place to express themselves and develop coping skills.

At this point in time we are not continuing our focus group; however, we have had requests from our students and principal to continue this intervention. We are considering this continuation but perhaps on a once a month basis as opposed to several times a week. Our principal has suggested that we report our findings to the administration and staff and work together to create a more permanent anti-bullying program.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Student Pre-Survey

Please think about your relationship with your friends as you answer these questions. Read each statement and darken the correct bubble for your response.

1.   **Since school has started this year how many times have you had a classmate talk behind your back?**

        O   Never

        O   1-2 times

        O   3-4 times

        O   5 or more times

2.   **Since school has started this year how many times have you had a classmate give you mean looks (i.e. staring or rolling eyes)?**

        O   Never

        O   1-2 times

        O   3-4 times

        O   5 or more times

3.   **Since school has started this year how many times have you been excluded (not allowed to be a part of) from a friendship group?**

        O   Never

        O   1-2 times

        O   3-4 times

        O   5 or more times

4.   **Since school has started this year how many times have you been teased or made fun of by others?**

        O   Never

        O   1-2 times

        O   3-4 times

        O   5 or more times

5.   **Since school has started this year have you observed mean looks being exchanged between students?**

        O   Never

        O   1-2 times

        O   3-4 times

        O   5 or more times

6.   **Since school has started this year have you observed someone talking behind another person's back?**

        O   Never

        O   1-2 times

        O   3-4 times

        O   5 or more times

7. **Since school has started this year have you observed someone being excluded from a friendship group?**

   ○ Never

   ○ 1-2 times

   ○ 3-4 times

   ○ 5 or more times

8. **Since school has started this year have you observed someone being physically bullied (hitting, pushing, etc)?**

   ○ Never

   ○ 1-2 times

   ○ 3-4 times

   ○ 5 or more times

9. **Since school has started this year how many times have you talked behind someone's back?**

   ○ Never

   ○ 1-2 times

   ○ 3-4 times

   ○ 5 or more times

10. **Since school has started this year how many times have you given mean looks to other classmates?**

   ○ Never

   ○ 1-2 times

   ○ 3-4 times

   ○ 5 or more times

11. **Since school has started this year how many times have you excluded others from a friendship group?**

   ○ Never

   ○ 1-2 times

   ○ 3-4 times

   ○ 5 or more times

12. **Since school has started this year how many times have you teased or made fun of others?**

   ○ Never

   ○ 1-2 times

   ○ 3-4 times

   ○ 5 or more times

Appendix B

Counselor Pre-Survey

1.   Since the school year has started how many times have you had someone in your office who was bullied?

- ○ Never
- ○ 1-2 times
- ○ 3-4 times
- ○ 5 or more times

2.   Since the school year has started how many times have you had someone in your office that was a bully?

- ○ Never
- ○ 1-2 times
- ○ 3-4 times
- ○ 5 or more times

3.   Since the school year has started how many times have you had someone in your office who was a bystander to an incident of bullying?

- ○ Never
- ○ 1-2 times
- ○ 3-4 times
- ○ 5 or more times

4.   What are some intervention strategies that you have used to decrease bullying? Please be specific.

5.   What do you find is the impact of bullying on students?

6.	Do you notice any patterns in the incidences of bullying? (i.e. who's involved, where it's occurring, and the reason for the bullying)

7.	Do you have any additional comments or information that would be useful in our research?

Appendix C

Pre-Observation Log for Lunch Supervisors

Supervisor_____   Date_____

Please put a tally mark in the correct column each time you observe one of the listed behaviors each day. This log is only for girls in the 6th and 7th grades. Please keep this information confidential.

DATE	TEASING i.e. you like Johnny, your shirt is ugly	NAME CALLING i.e. dork,jerk,fatso	EXCLUSION FROM GROUPS	GOSSIP/ RUMORS	PHYSICAL HARM
Sept.4					
Sept. 5					
Sept. 6					
Sept. 7					
Sept. 10					
Sept. 11					
Sept. 12					
Sept. 13					
Sept. 14					

Teasing

Appendix D

13 How does it feel to be treated without respect?

Look at the word search and find the words that show how people feel when they aren't being treated with respect. The words can be in any direction.

upset   foolish
ashamed   angry
sad   nervous
hurt

H	A	M	S	B	T	C
A	S	H	A	M	E	D
D	F	I	D	D	S	G
H	K	P	L	D	P	M
N	E	R	V	O	U	S
I	H	U	R	T	O	Q
Z	Y	R	G	N	A	F

14 Partner activity:
How can you respect someone's feelings?

Work with a partner to complete the sentences.

I can show respect for adults' feelings by:

_____

_____

I can show respect for kids' feelings by:

_____

_____

15 Partner activity:
What does "respect for differences" mean to you?

Mark each statement below "**agree**" or "**disagree**." Then join a partner and discuss your answers.

Respect for differences means treating everyone the way you would like to be treated, even if they are different

Agree	Disagree	
☐	☐	1. People who are the same should stick together.
☐	☐	2. Thinking about how someone feels can help you respect differences.
☐	☐	3. If someone doesn't respect your differences, you shouldn't respect their differences.
☐	☐	4. People who are different from everyone else should change.
☐	☐	5. Differences in the way people dress, talk, and eat are normal.

Appendix E

odd girl out

alexa vega   lisa vidal   leah pipes

Based on *The New York Times* Best Seller
ODD GIRL OUT: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls

odd girl out

...bbing. Rumor spreading. The silent treatment. Email slurs
...ous websites. Welcome to the next generation of torment.
...ega (*Spy Kids*) stars as a popular girl who suddenly finds
...ousted by the "in crowd" – and delivered into untouchable
...when her former best friend turns everyone against her.

2005 • Color • Feature Run Time Approx. 85 Minutes

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Appendix F

TReVoR RoMain

Cliques, Phonies & Other Baloney

Based on the best-selling, award-winning book series.

TReVoR RoMain

COLLECTION

Cliques, Phonies & Other Baloney

DVD
0015
STEREO

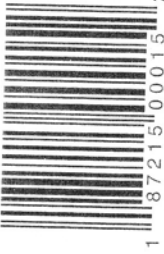Skye's Journal

Becoming "One of a Kind"

Being one of the cool kids may not always be what it seems. After feeling rejected by her best friend Jack, Skye decides she needs some new friends. Everything changes when she finds herself part of a not-so-nice clique led by Brittany, one of the so-called 'popular' girls. Skye loses track of her own identity as her new "friends" change the way she looks, acts, talks and dresses. They even change her name! With a little help from Trevor and Jack, Skye finally sees who she truly is and what she has become. In the end, Trevor shows everyone the importance of being true to ourselves and reminds us that we are all, "One of a Kind."

Tips to deal with Cliques!

...us real life situations, Trevor helps kids understand the difference ...lique, or group of friends, and an exclusive or mean clique. Being ...que is okay, but excluding others and putting people down ...t. In his warm, caring and funny way, Trevor offers ...elpful suggestions on how to dare to be different, keep ...an open mind about others, and most importantly, how ...to remain true to yourself, no matter what.

Special Features
- Spanish Sub-Titles
- Trevor Live on Cliques
- Meet Trevor
  -An Interview with Trevor Romain
- 6 Music Videos & Karaoke
- Audio Commentary

Real Life Lessons For Kids

Award-winning, best-selling author Trevor Romain has written and illustrated more than 30 books which have been translated into 14 different languages. When he's not noodling and doodling, he travels all over the country speaking to kids in schools on a variety of topics including fear, homework, death, and divorce. He is dedicated to changing children's lives forever by offering kids positive solutions for difficult problems.

For more info on Trevor and our products, visit us at
www.trevorromain.com
or call 1-877-FROMAIN

ISBN-10 # 0-9787783-0-8
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Cliques, Phonies & Other Baloney
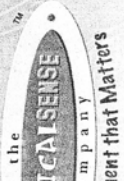
Appendix G

The Gossiper

Author Unknown

A woman repeated a bit of gossip about a neighbor. Within a few days the whole community knew the story. The person it concerned was deeply hurt and offended. Later the woman responsible for spreading the rumor learned that it was completely untrue. She was very sorry and went to a wise old sage to find out what she could do to repair the damage.

"Go to the marketplace," he said, "and purchase a chicken, and have it killed. Then on your way home, pluck its feathers and drop them one by one along the road." Although surprised by this advice, the woman did what she was told.

The next day the wise man said, "Now go and collect all those feathers you dropped yesterday and bring them back to me."

The woman followed the same road, but to her dismay, the wind had blown the feathers all away. After searching for hours, she returned with only three in her hand. "You see," said the old sage, "it's easy to drop them, but it's impossible to get them back.

So it is with gossip. It doesn't take much to spread a rumor, but once you do, you can never completely undo the wrong."

Appendix H

TRAINING
wheels

Portable Teambuilding Programs
Michelle Cummings
7095 South Garrison Street, Littleton, CO 80128
Phone: 888-553-0147 Fax: 888-553-0146
info@training-wheels.com, www.training-wheels.com

Cross the Line

Props/Materials Needed: Two ropes or masking tape, large room (Big enough for entire group.)

Step by Step Procedure:
- Put two ropes (or tape lines) in the center of the room on the ground, so they are parallel, about 3-4 feet away, and also span the length of the room.
- Line up your participants on one side of the line you placed on the ground, so everyone is on the same side of the room, facing the line.
- Tell your participants that they are going to do an activity and that this activity requires these three things; respect, sensitivity, and quiet. Go over these three things with the students. Also tell the students that this activity is about them; not their friends, or people standing next to them, but about them.
- Once you have covered the "rules" to the activity, tell the students that once they are able to be quiet, respectful and sensitive, they can cross the line. Once they have crossed over the line then there should be no talking and we will start the activity.

Introduction to the activity: We are going to do an activity that has to do with people's feelings. Sometimes when someone hurts another person he is just being mean or maybe she is being careless—or maybe they feel pressure from their friends to join in when other people are teasing someone. Other times, people are mean to someone just because of who they are—just because of the color of their skin, or their ethnicity. We are going to do this activity in complete silence. You might have some strong feelings during this activity—sadness, anger. So we need to be very respectful and caring to one another. No laughing, talking or even whispering, so we can all feel safe.

I am going to call out a group and if you belong to that group or identify with that group, please cross the line and turn around to face the other students on the other side of the line. (Give an example at this point, "if you are a boy, please cross the line" "if you are in the fifth grade, please cross the line"). Tell the participants that if they don't feel comfortable crossing that they do not have

Appendix H

to. Also remind them that this activity is done in silence and is also an individual activity. They are not to judge other people and they can make the decision to cross the line by themselves.

After each of the "cross the line" categories, you will pause until the participants who have crossed the line have turned to face the other participants,. Say out loud, "Notice how it feels to cross the line; look who is with you, look who is not with you and cross back over."

Crosswalk prompts:
- Cross the line if you've ever been teased or called a bad name or made fun of.
- Cross the line if you've ever been picked last in games or sports or left out of an activity all together.
- Cross the line if you've ever been called a mean name or put down just because you're a girl.
- Cross the line if you've ever been judged or teased because of the color of your skin.
- Cross the line if you've ever been teased because of your religious background.
- Cross the line if you've ever been teased about your accent or your voice, or told that you couldn't sing.
- Cross the line if you or anyone in your family or a friend has a disability that you can or cannot see.
- Cross the line if you're a boy and you've ever been told you shouldn't cry, show your emotions or be afraid.
- Cross the line if you've ever felt alone, unwelcome or afraid.
- Cross the line if you have intentionally hurt someone's feelings.
- Cross the line if you've ever felt pressure fro your friends or an adult to do something you didn't want to do and felt sorry for it afterwards.
- Cross the line if you've ever stood by and watched while someone was hurt and said or did nothing because you were too afraid.
- Cross the line if people routinely mispronounce your name.
- Cross the line if you have ever been teased because of the part of the world or country you or your family comes from.
- Cross the line if you have ever been the only person of your race/ethnicity in a classroom.

Debrief

What are some feelings that came up for you during this activity?
Why was it so important to be quiet, respectful and sensitive?
What was the hardest part for you?
What did you learn about yourself? About others?
What did you want to remember about what we've just experienced?

Appendix H

How does it make you feel when you are getting teased for something that you cannot help?
Why do you think other people tease?
Talk about the cycle of teasing, name calling, etc.,
How can you put an end to this cycle?
Why is it important to be allies to each other?

Facilitator Note:
The goal of this activity is to help break down the barriers between children that perpetuate acts of unkindness. Children become aware that others face many of the same insecurities, fears and challenges that they do. They learn that showing your feelings doesn't make you a weak person, rather it takes courage. They learn that other children can be appreciative and supportive when they reveal those feelings. Be careful not to be judgmental or shaming in this activity. Be supportive and accepting. Everyone in the program will probably have a reason to cross the line. Many children will need your support in realizing that they might be modeling behaviors that they have seen or passing along treatment they have received. With help and guidance children can change such hurtful behaviors.

Source: Making the Peace and Michelle Cummings, Training Wheels,
www.training-wheels.com