Evaluation of an Elementary PBIS Bully Prevention Program

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EVALUATION OF AN ELEMENTARY PBIS BULLY PREVENTION PROGRAM

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EVALUATION OF AN ELEMENTARY PBIS BULLY PREVENTION PROGRAM

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School bullying has become an international source of concern. The media has captured the attention of the public with coverage of incidents such as the Columbine massacre. On April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold walked through their school, shooting particular students they found. One victim asked why they were doing it. They said it was a dream come true and “payback” for being ostracized by their peers (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010). Until such devastations acted out in schools, bullying was considered a rite of passage. For the most part, parents and faculty did little to prevent it.

In recent years psychological research studies have confirmed that bullying can be detrimental to the emotional, physical, and mental health of developing adolescents.

This program evaluation was completed to determine whether or not the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports bully prevention intervention implemented at an elementary school in Kentucky was effective by creating a more positive school climate, increasing the amount of bystander participation during bullying incidents and decreasing the number of times students felt they had been treated disrespectfully. Analyses indicated the intervention was unsuccessful. Student ratings were very positive prior to the implementation of the intervention and were similarly positive after the intervention that been implemented. Data provided by the school indicated there was not a bullying problem within the school prior to implementing the intervention.
Chapter 1: Introduction

School violence has been a national topic of concern for over a decade. America has had a long and varied history detailing the many incidents of school violence. The most notable involve school shootings. The very first child to commit a school shooting was a 13 year-old boy by the name of Mathew Ward in Louisville, Kentucky. This incident occurred on November 2, 1853 (“Kentucky Murder Trial,” 1854). The first child-on-child shooting occurred on June 8, 1867 (“A Boy Shot,” 1867). The awareness of violence in schools became a subject that would not be ignored by our nation after the April 20, 1999 Columbine shootings.

In an effort to deal with violence in schools, states began to focus on the rules governing gun ownership and the emotional and mental problems of the individuals committing the violent acts. These discussions have led to changes in some state laws that require stricter rules surrounding gun ownership and more intense protocols for professionals working with people who may be of harm to themselves or others.

Unfortunately, these approaches have not provided solutions to all school-based needs. Some schools have adapted by adopting a new set of priorities that include not only instructional concerns, but also the need for emotionally safe learning environments for students. Bullying was a concern that schools felt a need to address in order to take a preventative or proactive approach to ending school violence rather than a punitive or reactive approach. Bully Prevention as a portion of the Positive Behavior Supports in Schools was one such program.
Bully Prevention is a program intended to decrease instances of bullying by creating a school climate in which everyone (a) understands what is expected, (b) is consistently aware through constant exposure to the program of what proactive measures are in place, and (c) participates in the common language of the program so that each individual understands what is happening, what is expected from them, and the reasons underlying the need to promote respect within their environment (Olweus, 1993).

**Statement of the Problem**

Bullying occurs within the school setting and is therefore impacted by the climate within that setting (Bowllan, 2011). The climate of the school creates the environment within which bullying is ignored, encouraged or discouraged. Administrators and teachers are not evaluated by the climate of the school or by the number of aggressive bullying acts that take place within that school building each year. Student academic performance is the tool used to measure the success of teachers and school administrators. This can create an environment that puts academic achievement very high on the list of priorities without giving as much time or attention to the other areas of the school environment that contribute to student growth. Students cannot function effectively in an environment that does not value safety and respect (Bowllan). Creating a school climate that promotes the worth of all of the people within it should be a priority for all schools.

According to Good, McIntosh, and Gietz (2011) the first area of concern is creating a common language. This language promotes a framework that each participant can understand and utilize effectively. Students need to understand what bullying is and what it looks like, but even more importantly they need to be aware that the entire school
and all adults within it share the same understanding. This needs to be communicated to each member of the student body. The teaching of the anti-bullying curriculum needs to begin prior to the explicit teaching. It needs to begin by teaching the mission and school-wide procedures adopted by the staff that foster respect for others. It should be communicated clearly that safety and respect for everyone is a top priority.

The second area of concern is the presence of a proactive learning approach versus a reactive disciplinary approach. A system that provides a proactive approach that involves time spent learning about the type of activities in which students will be engaged, what behavior is expected, and what procedures will be followed should decrease the need for reactive disciplinary action. The bully prevention curriculum provides information that is used to educate the student population about what bullying is, how others should be treated, and what to do in the event that they become involved in a bullying event through positive behavior supports already present in their school (Good et al., 2011).

The third area of concern is the role of community within the school setting. A very important consideration when providing education and positive behavior supports to children in schools is that they feel as if they are a part of a larger community that takes responsibility for the safety of everyone involved. The role of the bystander in the bullying triad is a crucial role in need of address. The majority of students in school are neither the victim nor the bully during instances of bullying. The majority of students are often bystanders, or witnesses to bullying behavior. The role of bystander must be understood and addressed to make students aware of their role in their anti-bullying community (McNamee & Mercurio, 2008).
Background and Need

Students cannot function appropriately or reach their full potential within negative, oppressive social environments that do not provide a feeling of safety or mutual respect. Cross et al. (2011) evaluated the effects of the Friendly Schools whole-school intervention on children’s bullying behavior. The intervention contained components that targeted the whole school, the classroom, the families of the students, and the individual students in an effort to decrease bullying behavior. The sample used was 4th and 5th grade students in a school in Perth, Australia. In a three-year longitudinal study, students were provided instruction in various school and home settings. The findings suggested that whole school interventions that engaged students within different social groups decreased bullying and increased a student’s likelihood of reporting incidences of bullying.

The research did not address the overall school climate component in regards to how students felt about being in school and whether or not they felt their school was a safe environment. It would be difficult to promote the overall effectiveness of a particular program without understanding how students felt about being in school prior to the program and how they felt after the implementation of the program.

Bullying is a negative experience, which is best addressed using an educational, proactive approach rather than a punitive, reactive approach. Garrity, Jens, and Porter (1997) suggested that while many schools promote the idea that punishment and power over students will decrease negative behaviors it has been shown that many of the students that bully other students have habituated to negative consequences and punishments. Garrity et al. asserted that power should be given to the caring majority
and that the caring majority should positively use pro-social interventions to achieve a positive pro-social atmosphere. They also suggested that students used the power they were given within the positive pro-social structure to connect to others within their community and typically used their power with competence and to promote respect for others.

The research did not directly address whether or not decreases in bullying behavior were found before or after they were taught the differences between bully behaviors and victim behaviors. Determining if direct instruction had a positive effect by decreasing instances of bullying behavior would have bolstered the findings of the study.

Schools are communities. The problem of bullying is not the sole responsibility of an individual. There are many people involved in the school community and each person within the community bears some responsibility for making the community safe and respectful. Kärnä, Voeten, and Poskiparta (2010) focused on two different groups of bystander behavior: reinforcing the bully and defending the victim. These two particular behaviors were hypothesized to provide direct feedback about the acceptability of the bystander’s behavior and were expected to influence future behavior. The results of the study indicated that when student bystanders reinforced the bullying behavior, the bullying behaviors increased. The results also indicated that when the bystanders defended the victim in the bullying situation the bullying behaviors decreased. The magnitude of change was greater when the bystanders reinforced the bully than when the bystanders defended the victim.

The research focus was broad in that it had a huge and diverse sample (6,980 3rd-5th grade students, in 378 classrooms across 77 different schools). However the sample
size did not allow the researchers to study each school in depth and find causal factors present within each school that might have led to reinforcing the bully having a stronger effect on bullying behavior than defending the victim.

**Purpose of the Study**

Bullying creates a negative social environment for students that inhibits their ability to benefit fully from the many educational and social opportunities afforded to them through participation in public school. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a bully prevention program in (a) decreasing instances of bullying behavior and (b) promoting the creation of a positive pro-social school climate by providing students with positive behavior interventions and supports and explicit instruction to create a school community founded on safety and respect for everyone.

Students who do not participate fully in their own educational experience are missing out on important portions of their education. Schools must create safe and respectful environments for students so that they are given every possible chance to be successful (Witthed & Dupper, 2005). The building blocks for a safe and respectful school environment must begin at the top by focusing school-wide. Teachers need to further promote the ideals of safety and respect within their classrooms. Students must be explicitly taught the common language which builds the framework of understanding they will use to appropriately navigate their way through social situations (Olweus, 1993).

The positive school-wide climate must be promoted through proactive instructional opportunities. Educators should spend more of their time educating children about appropriate ways to treat others and spend less of their time on punitive
disciplinary approaches to improve student outcomes and behaviors. It is necessary that teachers and school administrators share in the shift from negative to positive in order to model the positive perspective they would like their students to embrace (Good et al., 2011).

The majority of students are not bullied in school. The majority of students are also not perpetrators of bullying behavior in school. The majority of students are often onlookers during incidents of bullying. Students should be aware of their role as a bystander. Bullying behavior is often prolonged and/or exacerbated due to the presence of an audience. Future incidents of bullying behavior are often predicted by the reactions of the bystanders participating in the bullying incident. The role of the bystander in incidences of bullying should not be overlooked. Addressing the role of the bystander in the bullying interaction and teaching children what to do when they find themselves as bystanders could decrease future instances of bullying within school (McNamee & Mercurio, 2008).

Based on the purpose of the study, four research questions were developed.

**Research Questions**

1.) Will the average number of discipline referrals for bullying behavior decrease after the intervention has been put in to place?

**Hypothesis one:** There will be fewer discipline referrals during the post-intervention phase than during the pre-intervention phase.

2.) Will students’ ratings of positive school climate increase post-intervention versus pre-intervention?
Hypothesis two: Students will rate their school climate more positively post-intervention.

3.) Will students’ ratings of positive bystander participation increase post-intervention versus pre-intervention?

Hypothesis three: Students will report actively engaging in a greater number of positive bystander behaviors post-intervention.

4.) Will students report fewer instances of being treated disrespectfully post-intervention vs. pre-intervention?

Hypothesis four: Students will report fewer instances of being treated disrespectfully post-intervention.

Significance to the Field

School communities function to promote the well-being of the students in society. Schools are inherently designed to increase the students’ level of academic knowledge and their ability to apply learned knowledge to novel situations as well as nurture their ability to use higher order thinking skills to solve complex problems and be successful. Schools are not inherently as concerned with the social-emotional functioning of their complex and divergent student population (Cowie & Hutson, 2005). Educating children is a process that may have less to do with the verb, to educate, which focuses on what teachers can actively do to help children improve. Educating children should focus more on the whole child and what is needed for each individual to be successful.

Programs implemented to deal with the social-emotional aspect of school life that have the potential to decrease feelings of fear and rejection by peers and increase feelings of belonging, acceptance, safety, and respect could help immensely in meeting the
individual needs of children (Cowie & Hutson, 2005). Improving outcomes for children so that they might have the most successful, productive, and meaningful life possible is what all invested stakeholders (children, parents, teachers, administrators, and society) should collectively want.

**Definitions**

1. **Bullying**- intentional aggressive behavior that involves an imbalance of power and most often is repeated over time (Olweus, 1993)
2. **Victim**- a person who has been exposed to bullying/victimizing behavior by others with some defined frequency within a specified time period (Olweus, 1993)
3. **Bully**- a person who repeatedly and purposefully does or says harmful things to a person who has a difficult time defending herself or himself (Olweus, 1993)
4. **Bystander**- everyone other than the bully or the victim who is present and witnesses a bullying incident (McNamee & Mercurio, 2008)
5. **Positive behavioral interventions and supports**- a systematic, proactive approach for promoting adaptive behaviors and reducing behaviors that interfere with learning (Bui, Quirk, & Almazan, 2010)
6. **Bully prevention program**- a whole-school program systematically applied that is intended to reduce bullying throughout a school setting (Bowllan, 2011)
7. **Bullying Triad**- a group consisting of the bully, the victim and bystanders (McNamee & Mercurio, 2008)
Limitations

This program evaluation examined a very specific population in a single school. The results would be difficult to generalize to other populations of people without similar studies being done that look at different populations simultaneously.

The applicability of the results to other age groups within the same geographical population of children would also be impossible due to the type of explicit instruction provided for the age group to which the program was being delivered. Bullying would likely encompass different behaviors for younger versus older students. Also, this thesis was a qualitative thesis that examined information gathered by the school prior to and after the presentation of the program. The evaluation was not research in which an experiment was completed using the manipulation of one group and the control of another group to gather experimental data. Therefore no research results were presented.

Ethical Considerations

The procedures used to complete this program evaluation involved looking at data gathered by the school. The data have no personally identifiable information attached. The anonymous data set collected by the school was analyzed for the study and the evaluation should have no potential risk to participants.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Bullying is a problem in many school systems. Understanding what constitutes bullying behavior is necessary so that responsible parties can begin to take the needed steps to end bullying violence. Dr. Dan Olweus, the renowned pioneer of research on bullying, created the most internationally accepted definition. According to Olweus, bullying involves an individual’s repeated exposure, over time, to one or more persons, with the intent to harm or distress and who apply abuse through words or physical force. Also, there is often an imbalance of power present in instances of bullying (Olweus, 1993).

Understanding the essence of bullying involves investigating the backgrounds of people prone to this behavior, as well as their victims. The support of properly trained school faculty, school-wide awareness of the issue, and supportive parents has been proven to systematically deter incidents of bullying among students (Yerger & Gehret, 2011).

According to Yerger and Gehret (2011) there are several reasons why a person develops aggressive social behaviors. Within the context of the school environment bullies tend to come from families with authoritarian parents, who use physical abuse to discipline. Victims are described as apprehensive, cautious, and vulnerable. This dynamic sets the stage for a problematic situation which can have devastating results, not only for the students involved, but the entire educational system.

The act of bullying in schools has become such an important issue in our society that the American Medical Association has classified school bullying as a public health priority (Yerger & Gehret, 2011). Teachers, administrators and parents are faced with the
question of what can be done to prevent bullying in schools. Research supports the importance of teacher, parent, and school system involvement in ending school bullying as well as the application of intervention programs such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Research also indicates the need for state legislation, which incorporates bullying prevention, and the training of teachers, to proactively address bullying, especially during the early stages of child development (Yerger & Gehret).

Although the research of Yerger and Gehret (2011) clearly defines the recommendations suitable for teachers, there is limited information provided for parents. It may not be enough to infer the need for parent support, without specific guidance and education on the subject. The team effort of parents and teachers could be a powerful force in initiating change in schools. Future studies into the relationships of parents and teachers may supply needed data to bridge the gap.

Sherer and Nickerson (2010) surveyed a random sample of 213 active school psychologists about the actions taken surrounding incidents of school bullying. The researchers believed that school psychologists were in a prime position to properly identify bullying and initiate prevention and intervention in schools. Viewed as a multifaceted problem, the study addressed system-level interventions, school staff and parent involvement, educational approaches, student involvement, and interventions used with bullies and victims. The team concluded that most strategies used to combat bullying were being implemented after the bullying had occurred rather than expanding to a proactive systems level approach. Peer support groups were undervalued and disciplinary actions for bullies proved ineffectual in lowering instances of bullying. School psychologists responding to the study promoted school-wide positive behavior
plans among other system-level intervention strategies. School psychologists in the study stated that the biggest barrier to changing the poor anti-bullying practices in their schools was changing the fundamental priorities present in their schools.

Sherer and Nickerson (2010) identified important limitations of their study. For example, some school psychologists may not be the best source of information because they devote most of their time to student assessment and do not spend enough time at any one school among students. Also, more studies are needed to determine which intervention programs used in schools are most successful with which populations of children.

Waasdorp, Pas, O’Brennan, and Bradshaw (2011) used a sample of students, staff, and parents of elementary, middle and high school students from the Maryland public school system for a study that focused on the contextual factors of a bullying program already in place as well as student, faculty and parental viewpoints. Areas of interest included indirect victimization such as cyber-bullying, rumor spreading, exclusion and stealing. The findings revealed that parents, staff and students all perceived safety and belonging differently. Students and staff were more likely to perceive their school as a safe environment when fewer instances of direct, outwardly aggressive, bullying occurred. Staff members were more likely than students to perceive their school as a safe environment when instances of indirect bullying, cyber-bullying or rumor sharing, occurred. Parents were more likely to share the perceptions of the students since the majority of the information they received came directly from their children.

Waasdorp et al. (2011) suggested that perceptions of safety varied between individuals within the school environment and that future research opportunities aimed at
discovering the reasoning behind the varying perspectives provided by parents, students
and staff could provide valuable information needed to address school safety. Obtaining
this data would allow for the bridging of the gap between differing perceptions and offer
the opportunity to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

**Intervention and Prevention Measures**

There are many forms of prevention that address the act of bullying in schools.
Blosnich and Bossarte (2011) suggested that the use of security systems does not always
serve the purpose of controlling low-level violence peer victimization, which is related to
bullying. The data showed no decrease in victimization due to the use of security
measures (cameras, identification badges, and security guards). The research suggested
these security measures work for high-level violence such as weapon possession and
gang activity, but not in instances when students know the camera is watching them.
They discovered that students were less likely to be victimized or bullied when teachers
or administrators were in the hallways and not when security guards were present. It is
believed when staff supervised the hallways, students felt supported by an authority
figure that had an invested interest in them.

Blosnich and Bossarte (2011) indicated that overall the included safety measures
were not associated with decreased reports of low-level violent behaviors related to
bullying. The data are cross-sectional and therefore cannot be used to ascertain if the
staff in the hallway was the single factor in lowering reports of low-level violent behavior
or if it was some other factor. These findings decrease the external validity of the study
and make generalizability to other educational settings difficult.

The impact of the school-wide Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) was
evaluated using a questionnaire. Bowllan (2011) concluded that the implementation of the OBPP created an overall positive change in the climate of the school. The OBPP applied methods that focused on the bully, those who were bullied and the bystanders while shifting the attention away from the bully and onto the needs of the victim. The sample used in the Bowllan study proved to be a limitation due to the small size of the sample and the fact that it was not randomized, which hindered the generalization of the findings to the larger population.

McNamee and Mercurio (2008) focused on the childhood bullying triangle, which includes bully, target and bystanders. They listed next steps in the intervention process, which included (a) intervention with the bully: introduce a new concept of power; (b) intervention with the target: introduce a new concept of the power of one; and (c) intervention with the bystander: introduce a new concept of responsibility. A list of suggested interventions were provided to help bystanders decide how to appropriately and practically deal with bullying behavior when they witness it. They suggested that by working together toward a school environment that focuses on warmth, the presence of positive adult interest and involvement, the consistent application of non-punitive consequences for unacceptable behavior and the presence of positive adult role models, a safe bully-proof environment can be created and maintained.

Cross et al. (2011) studied the effectiveness of the Friendly Schools intervention program. The intervention involved the bully, school, classroom, family and students. Self-reported data were collected on children eight-to nine-years-old in 29 schools over the course of three years. Three levels of intervention were implemented: (a) a whole school intervention, (b) an awareness building intervention, and (c) grade level
interventions for fourth and fifth grade. The study indicated there was a significant
decrease in bullying behavior in fourth and sixth grade. There was no significant
decrease in bullying behavior in fifth grade.

The findings of Cross et al. (2011) may need further investigation. They targeted
a fourth grade cohort to proactively change the effects of bullying in fifth and sixth grade.
There may have been a problem with the fundamental assumptions underlying the study.

Changing the overall climate of the school is one of the main objectives of anti-
bullying interventions. Garrity et al. (1997) conducted research on the bully proofing of
schools. The research suggested that the most important element of bully proofing
involved the group of students who were neither bullies nor being bullied by others.
Gaining the support of this majority population set a powerful precedent for the rest of
the students. Supporting the victims was strongly emphasized. Victims of bullying were
trained to cope with bullies. The research indicated that strengthening the relationships
among school staff, parents, students and the community contributed most to creating a
positive change and bully proofing the school.

In the Barhight, Hubbard, and Hyde (2013) study the physiological and emotional
reaction to bullying was observed by use of video viewing and self-report questionnaires.
The team attempted to predict what types of children would or would not participate in
bystander behavior based on their reactions to the stimulus. Through observation, the
group attempted to determine if certain children would naturally cluster into groups based
on their emotional or unemotional reactions to witnessing bullying. They cited Pepler
and Craig, who found that bystanders are present 85% of the time during a bullying
episode and that understanding the participation of bystanders in a bullying event is
crucial to its prevention. The second goal of the study was to examine whether or not the physical and emotional reactions of the children to bullying videos would predict if they would stop a bullying incident.

The Barhight et al. (2013) study focused on five sub-factors. The first was the likelihood that children who have been bullied will intervene when observing bullying. The second was the social-efficacy of bystander choice in ending a bullying incident. The third was how emotionally reactive children would be given different situations. The fourth was the level of empathy, if any, the child would demonstrate for someone else. The fifth sub-factor was differences in age and gender. The results suggested that the importance of physiological and emotional observations were important and that children in the emotional group were more likely to intervene than children in the unemotional group with age being a significant predictor in both groups. Older children were more likely to intervene than young children. Peer victimization was a marginal predictor. Children who reported higher levels of peer victimization and lower levels of emotional expressiveness were less likely to try and intervene to stop bullying. There was a larger group of children who had no reaction to the bullying. This suggested that there was a need for in-depth education on the importance of bystander behavior during bullying events.

The Maunder and Tattersall (2010) study investigated how the staff managed bullying behavior in secondary schools and what factors helped or hindered the practice of bully prevention. Teacher’s reported a lack of confidence when dealing with bullying behavior and reported that bullying was not a priority due to the high levels of stress present in their profession. Maunder and Tattersall cited certain limitations of their study
within their article. Participants were interviewed at the school or in a senior staff member’s office, which could have influenced the candidness of their responses. Also, the interviewer had not met many of the participants, which may have hindered the ability to establish a relationship and provide a calming atmosphere.

Harwood and Copfer (2011) explored the perspective of the teacher related to teasing in schools. Teachers perceived bullying as intent to hurt, and teasing as playful in nature. Teachers were in the position to prevent and deter teasing. Teachers’ personal histories played key roles in their perceptions of teasing. For example, Harwood described a teacher who was both a teaser and was teased as a child. She believed teasing was a part of childhood, and supported teaching empathy to the teaser and social coping skills for the teased. The study acknowledged the impact of teasing on children and that teachers should address teasing with their students. The Harwood and Copfer research used self-reports, which impaired their ability to be sure of what preventative strategies teachers actually used in their classrooms. Future observational studies would be helpful in measuring the effectiveness of the methods used.

Novick and Isaacs (2010) explored the role and responsibility of the school community in bullying prevention. They found that adult bystanders/educators felt confident in addressing bullying when it was reported to them directly by a student. They found that many teachers do not report bullying when observed because of their lack of training and awareness. Adult bystanders/educators are often not aware of what constitutes bullying. A limitation of this study relates to the focus on teacher perceptions. Research comparing student and teacher reports could provide important information.
Williams and Winslade (2008) focused on the therapeutic method of “undercover teams” used by school counselors. Undercover teams are groups of children chosen by the counselor to include two children who have been bullied, two unrelated children (children who have neither been reported as a bully or a victim in a bullying incident) and two children who have been identified as bullies. They are then asked as a group to read a narrative written about a student who had been bullied and then work together as a team to rewrite the narrative to create a more positive experience for the victim within the narrative. The approach was intended to circumvent the cycle of bully, victim, and bystander among students. Every student in the group would be able to play the protagonist and contribute ideas that would positively change the narrative. The authors focused on how the traditional tactics of punitive action by school authorities is ineffective. The act of threats and punishment only mirror the same negative power relationship exhibited by the student accused of perpetrating the bullying. This approach does not constructively change behavior and, ironically, reinforces the negative behavior.

Williams and Winslade (2008) have suggested that bullies and bystanders of bullying should not be labeled as such. Bullying and bystanding are practices students participate in by choice. Therefore they can choose to change. They suggest that by approaching the problem with a proactive versus reactive plan and involving all participants that everyone’s problems will be addressed, not just the victim of the bullying. Furthermore it teaches children to take responsibility for their actions and to choose to change their circumstances without the weight of peer pressure.

**The Bystanders’ Role in Bullying Prevention**

The participation of bystanders during a bullying incident is a contributing and
supporting element to the act of bullying. Students who see bullying, and participate through continued watching, contribute to the continuation of aggression in schools. Over 50% of students admitted they allowed bullying to occur (Kueny & Zirkel, 2012).

Sanchez and Cerezo (2010) explored the varying degrees of involvement different people played in the act of bullying. The study comprised 426 fourth, fifth and sixth grade students in Murci, Spain. Age, gender, specific needs, immigration status, educational support and grades repeated were factors examined in the study. The study indicated that bullying was evident among all three grades studied. Specific needs children were more often victims and grade-repeaters were more often bullies.

McNamee and Mercurio (2008) found that bullying occurs within the presence of peers 85% of the time. Most students participating in bullying events are neither bully nor victim. The majority of participants are bystanders. The role of the bystander is least well understood. The researchers offer the opinion that the bystander is not an innocent party and that the bystander is motivated to participate for some specific reason. The motivation could be a passive connection with the bully in which they are being entertained by watching the bullying, an ability to bully vicariously as an onlooker or fear that the bully will victimize them as well.

Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) approached the bullying issue from a socio-cultural perspective. They described how bullying is a part of our culture. They proposed that understanding the function of bullying could help in the prevention of bullying. They stressed the role of the community and the pervasive cultural norms applicable to bullying. The research indicated that being different from the majority was at the core of bullying behavior. They stressed the need to understand students’ cultural
backgrounds, which provided important information needed to identify acts of bullying. The bully often pointed out what made the victim culturally different from the majority, which caused the victim to withdraw from the student or social culture.

Kärnä et al. (2010) studied the actions of bystanders in bullying situations. They focused on whether or not bystander behavior increased the risk of victimization for vulnerable students. The sample used was 6,980 primary school children in third, fourth and fifth grades from 378 classrooms in 77 different schools. The research suggested that bullying is a group phenomenon in which classmates assume different roles, including encouraging the bully. This action can affect the intensity of the victimization. Peer bystanders often participated in bullying in an attempt to protect themselves from being bullied. The research indicated that to reduce victimization the bystanders must realize and take responsibility for the role they played in the victimization of their peers.

A limitation of the Kärnä et al. (2010) study was the ability to make a definitive conclusion about the direction of the effects. However, peer rejection was more likely a cause than a consequence of victimization.

According to Polanin, Espelage, and Pigott (2012), the definition of bystander is a person who is neither bully nor victim, but is present during an act of bullying and neither intercedes nor walks away. The bystander may choose to intervene to stop the bully, encourage the bully, or view the bullying passively. The primary goal of the research was to present a meta-analysis that would assess bystander intervention behavior and empathy.

The results supported the emphasizing of the role of bystander behavior that encourages walking away and not reinforcing bullying behavior and encouraging pro-
social behaviors within a group context. A limitation present in the Polanin et al. (2012) meta-analysis was the small number of studies used. It included only 11 studies and reported only 12 effect sizes.

The literature available on bullying prevention is plentiful and varied. Dr. Dan Olweus defined bullying and created an anti-bullying program that was intended to address students within school systems who were in need of help. Research has been completed on many different facets of school life including the physical structure of the school building, the presence of cameras, the wearing of identification, the relationships between students and staff as well as staff and parents, school-wide, classroom and individual positive behavior supports and the inclusion of a common language that allows all people within a school environment to communicate effectively and systematically identify bullying. Much of the research supports an inclusive responsible approach that incorporates school-wide positive behavior supports and the explicit teaching of bully prevention practices in which all school stakeholders are involved.
Chapter 3: Method

The research question guiding this program evaluation is whether or not educating students using a bully prevention curriculum will create a proactive environment that will increase positive school climate while decreasing instances of bullying. This program evaluation was conceptualized in an attempt to address the overarching question, “Does this program work?” by addressing a subset of four specific research questions:

1.) Will the average number of discipline referrals for bullying behavior decrease from pre-intervention phase to post-intervention phase?

2.) Will student ratings of school climate increase (more positive) post-intervention versus pre-intervention?

3.) Will students’ ratings of positive bystander participation increase post-intervention versus pre-intervention?

4.) Will students report fewer instances of being treated disrespectfully post intervention vs. pre-intervention?

The research design of this project is not a quasi-experimental design. There will be no manipulation of an independent variable to determine the effect on a dependent variable. There will be no measurement of a control group with which to compare the results from an intervention group. It is a qualitative pre-experimental model, using a one-group pretest-posttest design. Comparing pre- and post-intervention information gathered by others will help determine if a significant change has taken place, which may have been caused by the intervention.

The data were collected in the form of office referrals for bullying behavior and a survey that was given to third through sixth grade students attending an elementary
school in Kentucky. The first portion of the survey addressed school climate. The survey questions were as follows:

1.) In my school I feel safe.
2.) In my school other students treat me respectfully.
3.) In my school I treat other students respectfully.
4.) In my school adults treat me respectfully.
5.) In my school I treat adults respectfully.

The second portion of the survey addressed bystander and bullying behaviors. The survey questions were as follows:

1.) In the past week how many times did you see someone else treated disrespectfully?
2.) In the past week how many times did you ask someone else to “stop?”
3.) In the past week how many times did someone ask you to “stop?”
4.) In the past week how many times did you help someone walk away from disrespectful behavior?

The third portion of the survey addressed whether or not the student was currently being treated disrespectfully and was used as a general gauge of how often students feel poorly treated. The survey question was as follows:

1.) In the past week how many times have other students treated you disrespectfully?

Office referral data were reviewed and included if the offense was a physically or verbally aggressive act perpetrated by one or more students against one or more students.
Setting

This study took place in a suburban elementary school in southcentral Kentucky. A group of 218 third through sixth grade students attending the school were given a survey to complete prior to the introduction of the bully prevention curriculum and then again after the program had been in place for six months.

Training in the bully prevention curriculum was provided to the principal, school psychologist, and guidance counselor by experts trained in implementing Positive Behavior Supports in Schools (PBIS). The program was implemented school-wide and the guidance counselor provided training for the teachers prior to the implementation of the program. The teachers and support staff were trained to contribute to the school-wide application of the program, monitoring how it was implemented and using common language to relay consistent messages to students regarding the curriculum. The students were introduced to the bully prevention program by the school guidance counselor during morning meetings. Students were instructed during weekly guidance lessons with additional support, instruction and/or practice from classroom teachers within the classroom throughout the week. A different lesson was taught each week and the rules and procedures initially taught were practiced and reinforced each day throughout the school by administration, teachers, staff and students.

Sample/Participants

The sampling procedure used was convenience sample, which is a non-random sample that meets criteria for this particular evaluation. Since this specialist project is a program evaluation it was necessary to choose a school site that was planning to implement a bully prevention program, but had not done so prior. A specific site was
selected for the sample needed. No special considerations such as age of students, size of school, socio-economic status or primary language were considered in the choosing of the school. All students within the school, kindergarten through sixth grade, received the intervention instruction, but only third through sixth grade students were included in the survey data collection. It was assumed by all parties that the ability to read and understand the questions asked on the survey could be too difficult for kindergarten, first grade and second grade students. Therefore the sample for this program evaluation was limited to only the 218 third through six grade students available. Fifty-one percent of the students at this school qualified for free or reduced lunch, 14 percent of the students had a disability, and the primary language spoken was English. Sixty-eight point one percent of the students were Caucasian, 7.2 percent were Hispanic or Latino, 6.5 percent were African-American, 11.4 percent were Asian, 1.5 percent were Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and 5.3 percent were of two or more races.

**Intervention/Materials**

The PBIS bully prevention curriculum was used to create an awareness of what should and should not be occurring within the school setting to address pro-social and bullying behaviors. The introduction of the program began with training for each adult member within the school. This initial training was intended to build a universal understanding of the program so that each member of the faculty and staff could build a cohesive mission for the school that would foster informed decision-making and proactive behavior management throughout the entire school environment. Expectations would be clearly universal to students regardless of their location within the building. It was meant to create a pro-social atmosphere that allows all participants to actively
engage in behaviors that are informed and helpful as well as creating a universal understanding that teaches students how to identify disrespectful behavior to include bullying, how to make decisions concerning what to do if they witness bullying behavior or are a participant in a bullying scenario, and how to report incidents when they occur.

To prepare the students, teachers, faculty and staff for the implementation of the program a set of school-wide expectations were established: Be Safe, Be Respectful, and Be Responsible. Several examples were provided per rule to aid in the understanding of how the rules apply to real life situations. For example, Be Safe included keeping hands and feet to oneself during instruction, Be Respectful included allowing one person to speak at a time and Be Responsible included actively participating in classroom discussions and using what was learned to complete assignments. A section of the preparation provided prior to the initial instruction included a discussion about what school-wide rules look like outside of the classroom to include how to say nice things to others in the building, how to travel throughout the building appropriately and how to keep hands, feet and unnecessary or unkind comments to oneself.

The first portion of the intervention was instruction in the terminology to be used. The entire school was instructed to discuss the “Stop, Walk, and Talk” terminology. Different options were discussed so that a common language could be chosen and implemented the same way throughout the school. After the specified language was chosen and paired with matching hand gestures the program was broken into six teachable chunks.

The first set of lessons was used to teach the Stop, Walk and Talk response and included class-wide practice involving scenarios likely experienced in school. Students
were instructed on when to “Stop,” when to “Walk” and when to skip the “Stop” and “Walk” steps and report the incident immediately. Several correct examples were modeled along with incorrect examples. The students were asked to identify which were appropriate responses and which were not. These lessons were the longest in the curriculum and took approximately fifty minutes per lesson to complete. The second lesson occurred the day following the first lesson and took approximately thirty minutes to complete. The thirty-minute lesson for students included how to reply when given the “Stop, Walk, and Talk” response and group practice. The students were then given 10 to 15 minutes one or two times per week to practice appropriate responses to the “Stop, Walk, and Talk” prompts. The remaining lessons in the curriculum focused on responding to gossip, inappropriate remarks, and cyber-bullying.

A portion of the curriculum was devoted to supervision, specifically how supervision should occur in different areas of the building such as the playground, gym, hallways and cafeteria. Instruction was provided that involved how to respond to acts of reported bullying, how to more closely supervise and check-in with students who are chronically bullied, and how to reinforce the correct use of “Stop, Walk, and Talk.” This portion of the curriculum was very important. The likelihood that children implemented the skills they had been taught during guidance and in the regular classroom would drop drastically if the supervisors outside of the classroom setting were not taking action on instances of bullying that were reported to them.

The program had a built-in component called faculty follow-up that allowed the faculty to provide information about how well they felt the program was working. This gathered information could be used to determine if changes needed to be made before re-
implementing the program during the following school year.

**Measurement Instruments**

The curriculum used for instruction was the Education and Community Supports program called the Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support by Scott Ross, Ph.D., Rob Horner, Ph.D., & Brianna Stiller, Ph.D.

The PBIS Respect Survey v1.1 provided within the curriculum was used to collect pre-intervention and post-intervention data (see Appendix A). The survey contained 10 questions. Three of the four research questions developed were addressed through the survey. The survey questions are as follows:

1.) In my school I feel safe.

2.) In my school other students treat me respectfully.

3.) In my school I treat other students respectfully.

4.) In my school adults treat me respectfully.

5.) In my school I treat adults respectfully.

6.) In the past week how many times have other students treated you disrespectfully?

7.) In the past week how many times did you see someone else treated disrespectfully?

8.) In the past week how many times did you ask someone else to “stop”?

9.) In the past week how many times did someone ask you to “stop”?

10.) In the past week how many times did you help someone walk away from disrespectful behavior?

Answer choices were provided in the form of a Likert Scale with answers ranging
from one to five. Office referral data were also reviewed and used to measure the number of pre-intervention and post-intervention referrals made for bullying behavior.

In order to analyze the data the questions were grouped in support of the research questions. The office referral data were compared pre-intervention and post-intervention in order to answer research question number one. Questions one through five were used to answer research question number two. Questions seven through ten were used to answer research question number three. Question number six was used to answer research question number four.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The pre-intervention survey was administered to students one week prior to the implementation of the intervention. All third through sixth grade teachers were given the surveys and instructed to administer the surveys on the same day of the week. The younger students were read each question and answer choice while instructed to choose one answer per question. Students were allowed to ask for clarification of vocabulary, but were given no instruction about content. Older students were provided surveys, asked to read the questions and choose one answer per question. The students were encouraged to ask questions if they did not understand a word, but were given no instruction about the content of the questions. The data in the form of surveys were collected by each teacher and given to the guidance counselor.

The post-intervention survey was administered six months later. The same teachers administered the same surveys to the same students. All third through sixth grade classes participated and completed the surveys on the same day of the week. The procedures for administering the surveys post-intervention were the same as pre-
intervention. Younger students were read the survey while older students read the survey they were provided. Both age groups were allowed to ask the teacher for clarification on vocabulary they did not understand, but were not provided any instruction on the part of the teacher.

The intervention was provided during approximately 30-minute lessons once per week during guidance instruction. Additional 10-15 minute practice periods once or twice per week were done in the regular education classroom to allow for follow-up and practice or discussion. The entire intervention was provided during the first semester of the school year. The post-intervention survey was completed following the presentation of all core intervention instruction.

**Data Analysis**

The research questions of this program evaluation drive the research design choices as well as the methods used to analyze the data. The data collected were categorized in groups relative to the research questions. Specific survey questions were matched to specific research questions. Statistical analyses using Microsoft Excel were then conducted. Each question’s analysis resulting in descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) was then compared pre-intervention and post-intervention by using a paired samples t-test per question to compare the mean scores and identify if there was a significant difference between the pre-intervention outcomes and post-intervention outcomes. After ten paired samples t-tests were completed to determine if the intervention was likely to have created a significant difference in ratings pre-intervention versus post-intervention, a Cohen’s $d$ effect size was computed per question to determine the size of practical significance or magnitude that the intervention may have had on the
sample of student responses. Cohen’s $d$ was the effect size chosen because it utilizes the combined standard deviation of the pre-intervention and post-intervention samples.
Chapter 4: Results

**Research Question 1.** Will the average number of discipline referrals for bullying behavior decrease after the intervention has been implemented? A count was made of the number of discipline referrals for bullying behavior made to the office for the entire school year prior to the implementation of the intervention. The annual total was zero. Another count was made of the number of discipline referrals for bullying behavior made to the office for the entire eight-month period after the implementation of the intervention. The total post-intervention was two. Hypothesis one predicted that there would be fewer discipline referrals during the post-intervention phase than during the pre-intervention phase. That hypothesis was proven to be incorrect.

**Research Question 2.** Will the students’ ratings of positive school climate increase post-intervention versus pre-intervention? The PBIS Student Respect Survey-v1.1 was administered to the students. It consisted of five statements and five questions. The five statements were used to measure overall school climate. Students were asked to rate how they felt about the following statements by choosing a rating on the Likert Scale provided. The answer choices ranged from one to five. A rating of one indicated *Strongly Disagree*, a rating of two indicated *Disagree*, a rating of three indicated *I Don’t Agree or Disagree*, a rating of four indicated *Agree* and a rating of five indicated *Strongly Agree*. The five statements are as follows:

1.) I feel safe.
2.) Other students treat me respectfully.
3.) I treat other students respectfully.
4.) Adults treat me respectfully.
5.) I treat adults in my school respectfully.

**Hypothesis Testing.** Hypothesis two predicted that students would rate their school climate more positively (moving closer to five than one) post-intervention. To analyze the results of the PBIS Student Respect Survey-v1.1 descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated for the pre-intervention survey scores and the post-intervention survey scores per question.

The pre-intervention mean statement one, *I feel safe*, was 3.97 (*SD* = .97). The post-intervention mean was 4.02 (*SD* = .98). The pre-intervention mean for statement two, *Other students treat me respectfully*, was 3.48 (*SD* = 1.24). The post-intervention mean was 3.44 (*SD* = 1.13). The pre-intervention mean for statement three, *I treat other students respectfully*, was 4.36 (*SD* = .81). The post-intervention mean was 4.37 (*SD* = .80). The pre-intervention mean for statement four, *Adults treat me respectfully*, was 4.18 (*SD* = .96). The post-intervention mean was 4.22 (*SD* = 1.02). The pre-intervention mean for statement five, *I treat adults in my school respectfully*, was 4.45 (*SD* = .81). The post-intervention mean was 4.60 (*SD* = .76).

Next a paired-samples *t* test was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-intervention and post-intervention means that would indicate the difference was likely due to the intervention. A Cohen’s *d* measure of effect size was also computed per question to determine the magnitude of the effect the intervention may have had on the students’ ratings. No statistically significant or practically significant differences were found for any of the five questions, which indicates that the prediction of hypothesis two that ratings of school climate would increase post-intervention was incorrect. Variations in school climate ratings from the
pre-intervention phase and the post-intervention phase were due primarily to chance and not due to the intervention.

**Research Question 3.** Will the students’ ratings of positive bystander participation increase post-intervention versus pre-intervention? The PBIS Student Respect Survey-v1.1 was administered to the students. It consisted of five statements and five questions. Four of the questions were used to measure overall bystander participation. Students were asked to rate how they would answer the survey questions by choosing a rating on the Likert Scale provided. The answer choices ranged from one to five. A rating of one indicated *Never*, a rating of two indicated *1-3 times*, a rating of three indicated *4-6 times*, a rating of four indicated *7-9 times*, and a rating of five indicated *10+ times*. The four questions are as follows:

6.) How many times did you see someone else treated disrespectfully?

7.) How many times did you ask someone else to “stop”?

8.) How many times did someone ask you to “stop”?

9.) How many times did you help someone walk away from disrespectful behavior?

**Hypothesis Testing.** Hypothesis three predicted that students would report engaging in a greater number of positive bystander behaviors post-intervention. Positive behaviors would be indicated with a higher rating (closer to five than one) for questions seven and nine. Positive behavior would be indicated with a lower rating (closer to one than five) for questions six and eight. To analyze the results of the PBIS Student Respect Survey-v1.1 descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated for the pre-intervention survey scores and the post-intervention survey scores per question.
The pre-intervention mean for question six, *How many times did you see someone else treated disrespectfully*, was 2.44 ($SD = 1.24$). The post-intervention mean was 2.33 ($SD = 1.26$). The pre-intervention mean for question eight, *How many times did someone ask you to “stop”*, was 1.63 ($SD = 1.06$). The post-intervention mean was 1.41 ($SD = .86$). The pre-intervention mean for question seven, *How many times did you ask someone else to “stop”*, was 2.51 ($SD = 1.29$). The post-intervention mean was 2.48 ($SD = 1.37$). The pre-intervention mean for question nine, *How many times did you help someone walk away from disrespectful behavior*, was 2.28 ($SD = 1.33$). The post-intervention mean was 2.36 ($SD = 1.30$).

Next a paired-samples $t$ test was conducted per question to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-intervention and post-intervention means that would indicate the difference was likely due to the intervention. A Cohen’s $d$ measure of effect size was also computed per question to determine the magnitude of the effect the intervention had on the student ratings. There was a small effect size and a statistically significant difference found on question eight, *How many times did someone ask you to stop*, between the pre-intervention mean of 1.63 ($SD = 1.06$) and the post-intervention mean of 1.41 ($SD = .86$), $t (217) = -2.42, p = .02, d = .23$. None of the other questions yielded statistically significant differences or meaningful effect sizes, which indicates that the prediction of hypothesis three that students would report in engaging in a larger number of positive bystander behaviors post-intervention to be partially correct.

Variations in positive bystander participation ratings from the pre-intervention phase and the post-intervention phase were due primarily to chance and not due to the intervention with the exception of question eight. Student ratings indicated that they were being asked
to “stop” less frequently post-intervention. That difference was likely caused by the intervention.

**Research Question 4.** Will the students’ report fewer instances of being treated disrespectfully post-intervention? The PBIS Student Respect Survey-v1.1 was administered to the students. It consisted of five statements and five questions. One of the questions was used to measure the individual students’ feelings regarding how they felt they were currently being treated. Students were asked to rate how they would answer the survey question by choosing a rating on the Likert Scale provided. The answer choices ranged from one to five. A rating of one indicated *Never*, a rating of two indicated 1-3 *times*, a rating of three indicated 4-6 *times*, a rating of four indicated 7-9 *times*, and a rating of five indicated 10+ *times*. The question is as follows:

10.) How many times have other students treated you disrespectfully?

**Hypothesis Testing.** Hypothesis four predicted that students would report fewer instances of being treated disrespectfully post-intervention. More positive responses would be indicated with a lower rating (closer to one than five). To analyze the results of the PBIS Student Respect Survey-v1.1 descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated for the pre-intervention survey scores and the post-intervention survey scores.

The pre-intervention mean for the question ten, *How many times have other students treated you disrespectfully*, was 2.31 (*SD* = 1.30). The post-intervention mean was 2.39 (*SD* = 1.30).

Next a paired-samples *t* test was conducted on responses to question ten to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-intervention and post-intervention means that would indicate the difference was likely due to the
intervention. A Cohen’s $d$ measure of effect size was also computed for question ten to determine the magnitude of the effect the intervention had on the student ratings. No statistically significant or practically significant differences were found for question ten, which indicates that the prediction of hypothesis four students would report fewer instances of being treated disrespectfully post-intervention was incorrect. Variations in ratings from the pre-intervention phase and the post-intervention phase were due primarily to chance and not due to the intervention.

The results based on student ratings clearly suggest that the intervention did not create a meaningful difference in the way students perceived the overall school climate, their behavior or the behavior of others within their school. The results do however suggest that based on the extremely high ratings the students initially gave that there was unlikely much room for improvement post-intervention. Based on the behavior referral data and the positive student ratings it is evident that the school had very little, if any problem with bullying pre-intervention.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) bully prevention program was implemented in an effort to educate students about bullying and introduce preventative strategies as a portion of their guidance instruction for the course of the academic year. A program evaluation was begun prior to the implementation of the program. The evaluation included a survey of questions that were administered prior to the program beginning and then again after the program had been in place for six months and the curriculum had been fully taught and practiced. The research design was created in an effort to address school climate, bystander participation and disrespectful behaviors. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the introduction of the curriculum would improve students’ perceptions of their school climate, increase students’ willingness to intervene on behalf of other students to end bullying and decrease the amount of disrespectful behavior reported by students.

Discussion

It was hypothesized that the number of discipline referrals for bullying behavior would decrease post-intervention. Zero office referrals were reported for the entire year prior to the implementation of the program. Two office referrals were reported for the six-month period post-intervention. The research question was proposed prior to gathering data during the pre-intervention or post-intervention phases. The question was based on a faulty assumption on the part of the researcher that if a bully prevention program was being implemented that there would be a documented bullying problem in need of addressing. The data clearly showed that there was no such problem present during the pre-intervention phase. The data indicated an increase in the amount of office
referrals for bullying behavior post-intervention.

The office referral form lists bullying as a behavior. The operating system the behavioral data was entered into allowed for different behavioral categories to be counted. For example behaviors such as defiance, peer aggression, inappropriate language, bullying and disruption could all be chosen as labels for behavioral infractions. The definition of bullying as applied to coding behavioral infractions was discussed before the intervention was put into place. It was unclear how individual teachers were deciding if verbal or physical intimidation of students by other students should be coded. Because of this non-consensus among every teacher in the building it is possible that some behaviors may have been coded differently according to teachers’ individual perceptions.

It was hypothesized that students’ perceptions of school climate would increase during the post-intervention phase. This hypothesis was based on the assumption of the researcher that there would be a wide distribution of negative, moderate, and positive responses prior to the implementation of program. The survey results prior to the implementation of the program show that students felt safe within their school. They felt they were treated respectfully and treated others respectfully. The ratings were so high during the pre-intervention phase that there was very little likelihood of finding a meaningful difference during the post-intervention phase. Students’ ratings indicated that students appeared to be both comfortable in their school, with their peers and with their teachers. Other positive behavior interventions and supports were incorporated into the school prior to the bully prevention program. Results may suggest that the supports already in place were actively creating an environment where school climate would be
rated high prior to the introduction of the bully prevention curriculum.

It was hypothesized that students’ ratings of bystander participation would increase during the post-intervention phase. Students’ ratings were similar during the pre-intervention and post-intervention phases in three key areas: how often students saw others treated disrespectfully, how often they intervened and how often they helped others walk away from disrespectful behavior.

Students’ ratings did show a significant difference post-intervention in the number of times someone had asked them to “stop.” This difference could have been due to the increased knowledge they may have learned regarding what was inappropriate behavior and what appropriate behavior provided via the teaching of the program curriculum. Students may have also more likely to inhibit certain behaviors once they had been subjected to others being rewarded for showing more positive behaviors or corrected for showing more negative behaviors.

Students wrote comments on the surveys indicating different behaviors they may have asked others to “stop” doing. Several of the responses indicated annoying behaviors such as tapping a pencil. Some students may not have had a clear idea of what types of behaviors should have been addressed using the “stop” signal. Additional teaching of the appropriate types of disrespectfully behaviors deemed “stop” worthy may impact future student ratings.

It was hypothesized that students would report fewer instances of being treated disrespectfully during the post-intervention phase. Students’ ratings showed no meaningful differences between the pre-intervention and post-intervention phases. Students’ ratings indicated that they were not often treated disrespectfully pre-
intervention. The ratings were very similar after the intervention. Students within this school felt they were treated well by others within their school prior to the intervention and continued to feel the same way after the intervention had been put into place. It was unlikely the intervention could have impacted students who already felt well treated.

**Limitations**

The choice of using a convenience sample based solely on the timing of their program implementation was a weakness of this study. The results indicate that had the researcher gathered more information on the group under study it may have been clear that the school implementing the program was not in serious need of an intervention. Whether the school has a positive school climate due to the prior implementation of positive behavioral supports or some other factor, it would have been clear that no meaningful differences could be found.

The premise of the study was to determine whether or not the program being implemented worked. It is unclear after completing the program evaluation whether or not the program worked and it could be assumed to work given a different sample of students. It lacks external validity. A real limitation of the study is that the evaluation was unable to answer the primary question it was designed to answer.

This research design did not include fidelity checks. The program was taught primarily by the guidance counselor. Teachers were taught the curriculum and how to implement or utilize the lessons during the school day. A common language was established to help teachers communicate effectively with students and one another about bullying behavior and school-wide expectations. Fidelity checks were not implemented to help determine with what level of fidelity the program was being implemented. It is
unclear with the fidelity checks if all students were afforded the same quality or amount of intervention and instruction and if all teachers seemed equally invested in the intervention.

The design of this study did not include adult input. Information afforded by the adults within the school who were key to the implementation of the program would have been valuable. Three of the four research questions depended solely on the impressions of the students under instruction. The scope of the research study is severely limited by the lack of perspectives taken into account.

**Strengths**

The results indicated that if a dependent sample is used and the survey ratings are not less positive and more dispersed along the continuum that the results of the study are unlikely to be informative about the usefulness of a program. This information could be informative for other researchers. It could inform a future researcher to take data regarding feelings of students prior to choosing a research sample.

Many different dimensions of student perception were measured using a single survey that was cost effective and able to be administered in a short amount of time. Research being conducted outside of laboratory settings encounter time and money constraints that must be manageable if research is to be conducted. This research study was completed without undue hardship to participants.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

It may help when completing a program evaluation to gather information on multiple samples prior to choosing the sample for the research study. It could be helpful to know whether or not a sample is in need of the intervention it is going to receive prior
to receiving it. All research adds to the pool of knowledge from which society may use in order to determine what warrants further investigation. It may be more informative if future research evaluating bully prevention programs is done with samples of participants able to claim significant change in order to determine if interventions have impact.

Schools need information about the problems they encounter, what programs address the problems they encounter, and whether or not the program can be expected to work. An important component when evaluating these questions is treatment integrity. Fidelity checks would answer questions such as whether or not everyone implemented the program, whether or not everyone implemented the program as it was intended and if the implementation was explained and paced correctly for the age of student to which it was being presented. Future program evaluations on bully prevention interventions should include a section that addresses treatment integrity.

Different perspectives provide different kinds of information. Future research on bully prevention programs should take into account as many perspectives of the people involved as are relevant. Information gathered from teachers, staff and administrators regarding bullying within schools could provide broad insight for researchers and participants. Information gathered from different sources could provide information that would enhance the understanding of results.

**Conclusion**

One conclusion that can be made based on the results of this study is that the students who were taught the PBIS bully prevention curriculum were less likely to be asked by others to “stop”. They may have been more aware of the types of behaviors they were engaging in as well as willing to engage in disrespectful behaviors less often.
after having been taught which behaviors were appropriate and which behaviors were not. Maybe the most important conclusion that can be made based on the results of this study is that the student population surveyed felt their school climate was very positive. They felt as if they and others treated one another with respect. They felt willing and able to participate in helping others if the need arose. This school was a place students enjoyed being and felt safe before and after the intervention was implemented.
REFERENCES


# APPENDIX A

**PBIS Student Respect Climate Survey**

Name: ___________________________ ID#: ____________ Date: ________________

Directions: **Circle** the best answer that matches each statement.

## In my school...#

1. I feel safe.
   - Strongly Disagree (1)
   - Disagree (2)
   - I don’t agree or disagree (3)
   - Agree (4)
   - Strongly Agree (5)

2. Other students treat me respectfully.
   - Strongly Disagree (1)
   - Disagree (2)
   - I don’t agree or disagree (3)
   - Agree (4)
   - Strongly Agree (5)

3. I treat other students respectfully.
   - Strongly Disagree (1)
   - Disagree (2)
   - I don’t agree or disagree (3)
   - Agree (4)
   - Strongly Agree (5)

4. Adults treat me respectfully.
   - Strongly Disagree (1)
   - Disagree (2)
   - I don’t agree or disagree (3)
   - Agree (4)
   - Strongly Agree (5)

5. I treat adults in my school respectfully.
   - Strongly Disagree (1)
   - Disagree (2)
   - I don’t agree or disagree (3)
   - Agree (4)
   - Strongly Agree (5)

## In the past week...#

6. How many times have other students treated you disrespectfully?
   - Never (1)
   - 1-3 times (2)
   - 4-6 times (3)
   - 7-9 times (4)
   - 10+ times (5)

7. How many times did you see someone else treated disrespectfully?
   - Never (1)
   - 1-3 times (2)
   - 4-6 times (3)
   - 7-9 times (4)
   - 10+ times (5)

8. How many times did you ask someone else to “stop”?
   - Never (1)
   - 1-3 times (2)
   - 4-6 times (3)
   - 7-9 times (4)
   - 10+ times (5)

9. How many times did someone ask you to “stop”?
   - Never (1)
   - 1-3 times (2)
   - 4-6 times (3)
   - 7-9 times (4)
   - 10+ times (5)

10. How many times did you help someone walk away from disrespectful behavior?
    - Never (1)
    - 1-3 times (2)
    - 4-6 times (3)
    - 7-9 times (4)
    - 10+ times (5)
DATE: February 14, 2014

TO: Heather Bakari
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [573326-1] Specialist Project/Thesis
REFERENCE #: IRB 14-278
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 14, 2014

REVIEW TYPE: Exempt from Full Board Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt from Full Board Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Mooney at (270) 745-2129 or irb@wku.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB's records.