ANTI-BULLYING POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN TEXAS MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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For over a decade national attention to bullying in American schools has increased, fueled by publicity about suicides of severely bullied youth. Schools have the charge of maintaining the safety of all students in order to ensure a positive learning environment, but there is little information about what they are doing to prevent bullying.

The purpose of this study was to provide information on principals’ perceptions of bullying and what anti-bullying policies, procedures, and programs exist in Texas middle schools. Ninety-nine principals completed an online questionnaire that addressed: 1) their knowledge of district and campus policies concerning bullying; 2) their direct experience with bullying; and, 3) bullying-prevention strategies and training in place in their schools.

Principals reported direct experience with all types of bullying included on the questionnaire in their schools, but had a surprisingly small mean of 14.8 verified bullying incidents during the 2010-2011 year. Over 60% felt the level of physical safety in their school was good or very good, but only 35% rated their school’s emotional safety as good or very good. Students, parents, and teachers reported bullying to the majority of principals; however, few schools conducted annual student surveys that could provide accurate information about bullying in their schools.

Procedures required by state law were more likely to be in place than those not required, though not all schools complied with all requirements. Fewer than 10% of schools had implemented a formal anti-bullying program. The most commonly cited...
obstacles to effectively addressing bullying were lack of time to conduct investigations and getting parents to file written reports (40%); however, despite having anti-bullying training, 27% felt limited by the lack of strategies.

This study fills a void in the literature by providing a statewide overview of middle school principals’ knowledge of district and campus policies and procedures on bullying. It also shows the extent to which legal requirements and best practices have been implemented.
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Bullying at school has become a prominent concern for educators as well as American society in general (Mah, 2009; Malecki, 2003; Marini, Dane, & Volk, 2010). The daily news regularly reports serious incidents of harassment of young people by their peers that sometimes has led to the bullied child committing suicide (Kohut, 2007). Yet, relatively few schools seem to have implemented effective programs to stop the bullying, even after parents of bullied children have stepped forward to try to find a way to stop this harassment (Holloway, 2010).

Numerous examples of peer bullying that resulted in serious consequences can be found in Texas. A lawsuit filed by a parent of a Terrell Independent School District (ISD) student charged that the district failed to protect her 12-year-old daughter from sexual assault by other students while the teacher sat at her computer nearby. Subsequently, the student was bullied for months after the incident, and the family was forced to send her to live with her grandmother in Greenville (Holloway, 2010). In another example, a 13-year-old hanged himself in a Johnson county barn. His mother met with school officials several days after the tragedy and complained that he had been bullied in physical education class and he was crammed in a trash can (Housewright, 2010). Another 13-year-old, who attended a middle school in an affluent suburb of Houston, took his own life after school in the fall of 2010. His family said he was “bullied to death,” taunted because of his small size and his religion and because he did not wear designer clothes and shoes. Students also accused him of being gay and performed mock gay sex acts on him in physical education class. The parents
claimed that they reported the problem to school officials, but it had fallen on deaf ears (O'Hare, 2010). A 2009 study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 18.7% of Texas students surveyed indicated that they were bullied at school in the previous year. This same study reported that, nationwide, 19.9% of the students reported being bullied (Childress, 2011).

These recent incidents and statistics indicate a need to study the current policies and procedures in middle schools in Texas to prevent peer-to-peer harassment and bullying and how it is addressed when it occurs. This study addresses what Texas middle school principals know about this issue, and what district and campus policies and practices have been implemented to prevent it. This chapter introduces a definition for bullying and explains how peer-to-peer sexual harassment is a form of bullying, and it describes landmark court cases related to school bullying. Finally, it explains the purpose and significance of the study and research questions that guided this study.

Defining Bullying

Traditionally, school violence has been discussed in terms of acts of physical assault, vandalism, and theft. However, a more pervasive, less observable form of violence and bullying affects a minimum of 15% to 20% of all students today (Mah, 2009). There are many definitions for bullying as well and many forms that bullying can take (Kohut, 2007). A basic definition of bullying, however, is any act that is “harmful, humiliating, and victimizing behavior that causes emotional, social, and physical pain for another person” (Kohut, 2007, p. 2). Olweus (1993), who has studied bullying since the early 1970s defines bullying in the following way:
A person is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. Negative action is when a person intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort upon another person through physical contact, words, or in other ways. (p. 21)

According to researchers Espelage and Swearer (2003); Horowitz, Vessey, Carlson, Bradley, Montoya, McCulough, and David (2004); and Malecki (2003) bullying is always overt behavior that can include any or all of the following behaviors: (a) verbal harassment, (b) excluding others from a peer group, (c) spreading lies about another person, (d) sending threatening letters or notes, (e) harassing another by phone, (f) sending e-mails that are considered harassing or threatening, (g) encouraging others to join in harassing another person, (h) physically abusing another person, (i) making racial and sexual slurs towards another person, (j) inappropriately touching another person or making sexual comments, (k) using intimidation to frighten someone, and (l) stalking a victim.

Gruber and Fineran (2007, 2008) reported that sexual harassment is a type of bullying that may be less common than other forms of bullying but which has a significantly negative effect on girls, gays and lesbians, bisexual and questioning youths. The victims of sexual harassment report having difficulties with self-esteem, mental and physical health, and substance abuse. Sexual harassment victims often suffer from sleep problems, emotional outbursts, and depression and anxiety (Gruber & Fineran, 2007).

Most students who are sexually harassed fail to report the abuse because they are embarrassed to report it or are afraid they will not be believed (Gruber & Fineran, 2008). Sexual harassment can take the form of (a) unwanted touching, (b) sexual remarks or jokes, (c) being shown pornographic photos, (d) spreading of sexual rumors,
(e) obscene gestures, and (f) offers for special treatment in exchange for sexual favors.

Both the Office of Civil Rights and the courts recognize two forms of sexual harassment: quid pro quo and hostile environment. Incidents of peer-to-peer sexual harassment and bullying fall into the latter category. Sexual harassment and bullying share a common characteristic: an imbalance of power. Early on, feminist authors recognized that sexual harassment had more to do with power than sexual attraction (McCaghy, 1985). Perhaps one of the most notorious examples of the imbalance of power on the national level occurred in late 20th century and brought attention to bullying.

On April 20, 1999 in Littleton, Colorado, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold used assault weapons and makeshift bombs to lay seige to their high school. The students killed 12 classmates and a teacher while injuring 18 others before killing themselves. Afterwards, their friends confirmed that they were constantly ridiculed and mocked at school. One incident that deeply humilitated the boys occurred in the commons when a crowd surrounded them and squirted ketchup packets on them and called them faggots. The incident occurred while teachers watched. The boys could not fight back and wore the ketchup the remainder of the day at school. In Eric’s suicide note he made it clear that he and Dylan felt bullied and alienated and that they thought it was “payback time” (Coloroso, 2002, p. p. xxii). Incidents such as the Columbine High School killings in Littleton are just one of the consequences that can occur when students are harassed and not given any support to help them cope with and escape bullying.

Preventing School Bullying
The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (P.L. 103-227) was signed into law March of 1994 (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1994). One of the goals pertained to all schools offering a disciplined environment conducive to learning, free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1994). Researchers, Batsche and Knoff (1994) noted that the goal would not be obtainable unless the issues of bullying and harassment are addressed directly by school systems nationwide.

Many states have responded to bullying incidents by passing legislation to prevent it. For example, Texas law addresses several aspects of bullying. Texas Education Code §37.001 requires that every school district in Texas have a code of conduct that prohibits bullying, harassment, and making lists of potential victims. Required in the code is a mandate for school districts to have a discipline management program to include education about, and the prevention of all forms of bullying and harassment in school, on school grounds, and in school vehicles. The program has to include training and education for teachers and parents as well. The legislation includes a provision allowing students to transfer when they are being bullied or harassed at their school, but the district is not required to provide transportation.

Mellon (2010) reported that anti-bullying legislation has been introduced in the Texas legislature but not passed. For example, one bill called for the creation of a hot line for complaints. Another bill that failed was one that would have required school bullies to be sent to disciplinary alternative schools. Still, other bills would have ordered schools to prohibit cyberbullying and to notify parents if their child was a victim of a bullying incident. Although not included in the Education Code’s anti-bullying provisions,
the 2009 Legislature did enact Texas Penal Code 33.07 which prohibits online harassment (Childress, 2011).

In 2011, the 82nd Texas Legislative Session saw several new bills introduced in response to numerous incidents and headlines involving bullying that had occurred since the 81st Legislative Session in 2009. The legislation focused on providing a more comprehensive definition of bullying, including cyberbullying, and developing new policies pertaining to training, reporting, and following through on allegations of bullying (Childress, 2011).

Governor Rick Perry signed into law on June 17, 2011, House Bill 1942 and House Bill 1386. House Bill 1942 addresses anti-bullying policy and House Bill 1386 relates to youth-suicide prevention. The legislation was supported by bipartisan consensus. Originally, House Bill 1386 was to be named in honor of Asher Brown, the gay youth who committed suicide in the fall of 2010 and whose parents lobbied throughout the legislative session. However, Asher’s name, along with references to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) school children, was later removed from the measure as it progressed through the legislative process (Wright, 2011).

There are several highlights to the new anti-bullying legislation:

- Establishes a new bullying definition that includes bullying through electronic means (cyberbullying)
- Integrates awareness, prevention, identification, resolution, and intervention in bullying into health curriculum
- Provides local school boards with discretion to transfer a student found to have bullied to another classroom or another campus in consultation with the
parent or guardian

- Requires local school districts to adopt and implement a bullying policy that recognizes minimum guidelines such as prohibition of bullying, providing counseling options, and establishes procedures for reporting, investigating and responding to an incidence of bullying (Equality Texas, 2011, ¶ 2)

The primary author of HB 1386 was Garnet Coleman (D-Houston). Coleman stated, “Every day, our children are emotionally traumatized and scarred and it is our responsibility to protect them before they are driven to suicide or become severely emotionally disturbed” (Equality Texas, 2011, ¶ 11). Some of the highlights in the youth suicide prevention law (HB 1386) are:

- Provides for the Texas Department of State Health Services, in coordination with the Texas Education Agency, to provide a list of best practice-based early mental health intervention and suicide prevention programs for implementation in all public schools
- Provides that the board of trustees of each school district may adopt a policy concerning early mental health intervention and suicide prevention (Equality, 2011, ¶ 10)

State Legislation beyond Texas

According to United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS, 2005), many states have made an effort to legislate against bullying of all forms. Some of the legislative attempts listed by DHHS are the following:
1. Several state laws encourage schools to implement a bullying prevention program (e.g., Colorado, New Jersey, and Oklahoma).

2. Several states encourage or require employee training on bullying and bullying prevention (e.g., Georgia, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Washington, and West Virginia).

3. At least six states require or encourage individuals to report school bullying incidents to authorities (e.g., Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Washington, and West Virginia).

4. Some laws emphasize the importance of disciplinary action for children who bully (e.g., Georgia, New Jersey, and West Virginia).

5. Two state laws suggest schools improve communication among staff and students related to bullying (New York and Rhode Island).

6. One law in West Virginia addresses the need to develop plans to protect children who are bullied. (DHHS, 2005, p. 3)

As of July 2010, Colorado, Hawaii, Indiana, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Mississippi had no bullying laws at the state level. Mississippi does have a law proposed (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

**Legislation and Court Cases Involving Sexual Harassment and Bullying**

Federal courts have identified school district responsibilities to address student safety including sexual harassment—now defined as a type of bullying (Gruber & Fineran, 2007). In February 1992, a landmark decision handed down by the Supreme Court in the *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools* case focused attention on the
issue of sexual harassment in K-12 schools. For the first time in the 20-year history of Title IX, “the federal law that guarantees an educational environment free from sex discrimination and by implication and interpretation, sexual harassment, schools could be held liable for compensatory damages” (Stein, 1999, p. 1). Earlier cases addressed the mandate for schools to provide a safe environment for students (Ingraham v. Wright, 1977); however, Franklin v. Gwinnett was the first case to hold a school district liable and award monetary damages (Wishnietsky, 1991). Until the Franklin decision, the only anticipated sanctions for violation of Title IX were an injunction to stop harassment or the withholding of federal funds (Southwest Educational Research Association, 2008). The courts have played a major role, in that state law remains very protective of public school officials working within the scope of their employment, therefore, more litigation is based on federal law (Walsh, 2008).

In the student-to-student sexual harassment case, Davis v. Monroe County (GA) Board of Education, 1996, the U. S. district court, Eleventh Circuit, ruled that the school district was not liable for a fifth-grade student’s alleged harassment of another student. Judge Wilbur Owens, Jr. of Macon, Georgia dismissed the case stating that the school did not have a custodial relationship with its students and therefore, did not have a special duty to protect them from other students (Walsh, 1999). However, in what had become a pattern of contradiction in the judicial system with regard to sexual harassment cases, on May 24, 1999, a 5-4 decision of the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that schools are indeed liable for student-to-student sexual harassment, if the schools were aware of the harassment and had not stopped it. A critical component of this decision was emphasized by Judge Sandra Day O’Connor, writing for the majority in
Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education (119 S.Ct. 1661). Judge O’Connor indicated that school districts would be liable under Title IX “only if they were ‘deliberately indifferent’ to information about ‘severe, pervasive, and objectively’ offensive harassment among students” (Walsh, 1999).

Dayton and Dupre (2009) reviewed bullying litigation in the United States and concluded that the present constitutes a piecemeal attempt to legislate “zero tolerance policies” against bullying. According to Dayton and Dupre (2009), legislative improvements in antibullying policies can help bring more attention, resources, and authority to the serious problem of bullying. A remedy for bullying needs to include having well prepared educators who can work with children to address the main causes and effects of bullying. Additionally, they suggested that there is need to pass more comprehensive law and policy remedies that can help promote broad institutional and cultural changes that are needed to offer better protection for school children.

School bullying has drawn both national and state level attention and has been addressed in the courts and legislatures; however, there has been minimal information and research from the individual campus level. This study is designed to further explore the policies and procedures that are currently in place in middle schools in Texas. There is a critical need for this information because the research states that bullying tends to peak in middle schools and thousands of public school children are affected by these policies every day.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to add to the literature regarding school policies,
procedures, and prevention programs that address bullying and peer-to-peer harassment by surveying middle school principals in Texas about district and campus policies, procedures and prevention programs currently in effect. In addition, the study sought to determine if the district and campus policies and prevention programs reflect best practices as delineated in the literature.

Statement of the Problem
The general problem is that bullying in American schools is on the increase, with consequences that may include children committing suicide to escape their tormentors. The specific problem of this study was to determine what policies, procedures and prevention programs are in effect in Texas middle schools to prevent bullying and peer-to-peer harassment.

Research Questions
1. What direct experience have middle school principals had with bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?
2. What district and campus policies and practices are in place to address bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?
3. What prevention programs do campuses have in place with regard to bullying and peer-to-peer sexual harassment?

Significance of the Study
With the growing number of children exposed to the negative consequences of
bullying or sexual harassment, it is important that researchers examine the types of programs and policies throughout the United States (U. S.) school system that are in place to deal with the problem. This study adds to the body of research by soliciting Texas middle school principals’ knowledge and perception of the problem of bullying and by determining what policies and programs are in place. The information gathered from the principals allows administrators throughout Texas and the U. S. to examine their own campus cultures and bullying prevention programs. Additionally, the information gathered in this study may be helpful to legislators who are sponsoring legislation by expanding both the definition of bullying and determining what areas of life students can be held accountable for the behavior. For example, some Texas legislators have been attempting to expand the places where bullying can be forbidden, specifically Internet communications. Students are no longer safe from bullying at school and at school functions because bullies often harass their victims at home through text messaging or Internet contact (Mason, 2009).

Studies may open avenues to more dialogue about what prevention programs can be implemented and the proper way to discipline those children who bully others. The Texas legislature attempted to pass a law that would require students who bully to be sent to alternative schools for bullies; the fact that the legislation failed shows how opinions over how to handle bullies is divided (Mellon, 2010). According to Mellon (2010), the nonprofit organization Bullying Police has given Texas a grade of C- because Texas law does not adequately define bullying, assign counselors to victims or require schools to correct, or publicly report data on such incidents. This study may
enlighten Texas legislative members about what is needed to address the problem of bullying in Texas schools.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of potential limitations of this study. First, this study focused specifically on middle school principals in Texas; due to this restriction in the sampling, the results cannot be generalized to a larger population. Second, the results found may be limited because other important classes of respondents, including students, teachers, and parents, were not surveyed as part of the study. Third, another limitation in this study is that the principals surveyed might not have been completely forthcoming with their thoughts on the issue of bullying. Rather, they might have been inclined to state that bullying was under control within their school. As a result, these factors might have served to bias the results as to the extent of bullying, thus making it appear less frequent than it actually is.

Definition of Terms

- Bullying - a conscious, willful, and deliberate hostile activity with intent to harm and induce fear through the threat of further aggression and to create terror (Coloroso, 2002).

Bullying will always include three, and possibly, a fourth element.

1. Imbalance of power: The bully may be older, bigger, of a different race or opposite sex. Bullying is not sibling rivalry, nor is it fighting between two equally matched kids who have a conflict.
2. Intent to harm: The bully intends to inflict emotional or physical harm; the bully delights in witnessing the victim’s pain.

3. Threat of further aggression: Bullying is not meant to be a one time event. Both the bully and the victim understand that the bullying will likely occur again.

4. Terror: When bullying escalates unabated, it will result in systemic violence used to intimidate and maintain dominance. It is not a onetime incident caused by an outburst of anger nor is it an impulsive response to a rebuke (Coloroso, 2002).

The bully counts on the victim becoming powerless by fear and expects the bystanders to become involved and supportive of the incidence; therefore, the cycle begins (Coloroso, 2002).

Bullying can be recognized by three social interactions:

1. Repetitive negative actions targeted at specific victims

2. An imbalance of power characterized by the victim being unable to defend herself or himself

3. Usually has an unequal level of effects. The victim may cry, show withdrawal, fear or anguish while the perpetrator of the bullying may be devoid of effect and little or no empathy is shown for the victim; it is though the victim deserved the aggressive treatment (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilli, 2000)

- Cyberbullying - Involves sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet (i.e., instant messaging, chat rooms, email and social
networking sites) or other digital devices such as cell phones. It may involve threats, stalking, exclusion, impersonation or other forms of harassment (Feinberg & Robey, 2008)

- Direct Bullying - Physical aggression, often takes the form of overt, physical contact in which the victim is openly attacked (Olweus, 1993)

- Hostile environment - A setting in which the following behaviors are tolerated: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature by an employee, by another student, or by a third party that is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to limit a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from an education program or activity, or to create a hostile or abusive educational environment (U.S. Department of Education, 2011)

- Indirect bullying - Occurs in the form of social isolation and intentional exclusion from a group and is the less visible form of bullying (Olweus, 1993)

  Other researchers may refer to this type of bullying as relational bullying.

- Sexual harassment - Unwanted and unwelcomed sexual behavior that interferes with a person’s life (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 2001).
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to examine the views of middle school principals in Texas on bullying and to identify measures that have been implemented to prevent bullying in their schools. The literature review is divided into several sections in order to support the purposes of the study. The first section describes research that documents the extent of bullying in the United States and in other countries. The second section examines research on the characteristics of bullies as well as the other stakeholders involved in the bullying phenomenon such as bully-victims and victims. The third section addresses the contextual framework of bullying, including the social and institutional conditions that affect bullying in schools and homes. The fourth section is directed toward the principal and the principal’s role in the school as it relates to bullying. The fifth, and final section, discusses bullying prevention programs.

Prevalence of Bullying

Researchers in the U. S. and other countries have attempted to document the extent to which bullying of school children occurs. As explained in Chapter 1, a student is subject to bullying if exposed repeatedly, over time, to negative actions of one or more other students or peers (Olweus, 1993). There is no one set definition for bullying because what can be considered bullying behavior involves many types of actions and words (Kohut, 2007).

Bullying in schools is widespread. Approximately 30% of all children in Grades 6 through 10 have been bullied or have bullied other children “sometimes” or more within
a single school semester (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). According to the national 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey 19.9% of students in public and private schools in Grades 9 through 12 reported being bullied on school property.

Varied evidence shows a climate of violence in many American schools. DeVoe and Kaffenberger (2005) report in the Student Reports of Bullying, which was a supplement to the 2001 National Crime Victimization Survey, that 14% of students ages 12-18 reported having been bullied in the last 6 months. The report noted that students that were victims of bullying were more likely to be victimized in other ways. Victims of bullying often were identified with the following characteristics or behaviors:

- More likely to fear attack on the way to or from school
- Engaged in avoidance behaviors such as truancy from school, classes or extracurricular activities
- More likely to demonstrate negative outcome behaviors, such as carrying weapons or participating in physical fights (DeVoe & Kaffenberger, 2005, p. 14)

Garrity, Jens, Porter, Ager, and Short-Camilli (2000) cautioned that violence in school is multi-pronged and is not all the result of bullying; however, bullying in elementary schools can easily turn to violence in secondary schools. Every day approximately 100,000 students carry guns to school. An estimated 6,250 teachers are threatened each day, and of those, approximately 260 are attacked.

Although there were a number of reported suicides by children in 2010, the bullying problem still has not risen to the national attention it was given in a landmark
study done in Norway after three students committed suicide there in the 1980’s (Mellon, 2010). Part of that problem, as authors have cited, is the lack of a precise definition for bullying, especially one that includes all the possible ways a child can be harassed in the twenty-first century (Mellon, 2010; Kohut, 2007).

Surveys on Bullying

The European community took a lead in collecting data on the extent of sexual harassment and bullying in the 1970s and expanded studies and surveys on these topics in the 1980s and 1990s. The initial surveys were of a preliminary nature and had small samples. When Olweus (1993) conducted a major national study that focused on bullying in Norway in 1983, he discovered there were signs that bullying had become more serious and prevalent than in the preceding 10-15 years.

In the U. S. a small group of surveys of sexual harassment and bullying began to appear about the time the courts and legal proceedings were drawing attention to sexual harassment in schools and other institutions. Sexual harassment is a form of bullying. It came to national attention prior to the more recent concerns with bullying in general.

The September 1992 issue of Seventeen magazine contained an article written by LeBlanc (1992) on the sexual harassment of a high school girl which included a request that readers respond to a questionnaire consisting of 11 multiple-choice items and two open-ended questions. The instrument was written by the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and co-sponsored by the National Organization for Women Legal Defense and Education Fund. Readers returned a total of 4,300
questionnaires by the deadline. The results were compiled from a nonprobability, random sample of 2,002 girls ranging in age from 9-19. No boys responded, which aligns to the readership of the magazine (Stein, 1999).

The data from the Seventeen survey showed that the most common forms of sexual harassment were receiving sexual comments, gestures, or looks (89%); followed by being touched, pinched, or grabbed (83%). Another important finding was that sexual harassment was not a one time only event: During the previous year, 39% reported being harassed on a daily basis. In two-thirds of the incidents reported in the study, the girls indicated that other people were present. Perhaps one of the most discouraging reports was that the classroom was cited as the location where most incidents occurred. The three findings coming from the location questions were: 94% of those who indicated that others were present reported that the sexual harassment occurred in the classroom; 76% of those reported that others were present cited the hallway; and 69% cited the parking lot or playing fields with many respondents citing more than one location.

There were multiple limitations from the findings of the Seventeen study: It is not scientific, respondents were limited to readers of the magazine who had experienced sexual harassment; the ethnic breakdown was representative only of the readership of the magazine and did not reflect national demographics and lastly, the respondents were all female. Therefore as interesting as the findings may be, there is no way to make valid generalizations (Stein, 1999).

In 1993 the American Association of University Women (AAUW) commissioned the research firm of Louis Harris and Associates to design a survey to profile the
problem of sexual harassment, teasing, and bullying in school. The AAUW also wanted to know the educational, emotional, and behavioral impact on students (American Association of University Women, 1993). The survey instrument consisted of 40 questions and addressed sexual harassment in multiple areas, such as frequency of experience and perpetration; physical or non-physical (type); grade level of first experience; frequency of peer-to-peer; location; and harassment’s impact on emotional state and education (Stein, 1999). The questionnaire was administered to a nationwide random sample of 1,632 8th to 11th grade boys and girls in 79 schools.

The AAUW survey was done in 1993 and repeated in 2000. Results were published in 1993 and 2000 as the Hostile Hallways reports and documented that harassment is widespread and has damaging consequences for its victims. These were the only studies that provided reliable nationwide data on peer sexual harassment until the beginning of this century (Shakeshaft, 2004). One of the major strengths of this survey was that it could be generalized to all U. S. public school students in Grades 8-11. The survey has a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of plus or minus four percentage points (Stein, 1999). The 1993 AAUW survey revealed a picture of sexual harassment similar to that of the Seventeen survey with the continuing theme of incidents occurring in public throughout the school and its grounds. A significant limitation of the AAUW studies was that students were asked to recall sexual harassment incidents during their entire school history and to focus on the most severe event. The emphasis on the worst incident may have distorted the severity of the harassment. In addition, the definition given to the students described sexual harassment as “unwanted and unwelcomed sexual behavior which interferes with life.”
Moreover, no information was provided on disabled or gay/lesbian youth and no measure of socio-economic status was recorded (Stein, 1999).

From these surveys, a picture of widespread, common occurrence of sexual harassment in school emerges. The surveys point out that sexual harassment can be a very public event, yet the results also show that school personnel many times treat sexual harassment among students as if it were a hidden, secret occurrence. Another important finding in the studies is that sexual harassment crosses gender and all age groups in schools. It is not confined to one particular target population which contradicts a common belief in society that only girls can be victims (Stein, 1999).

Nansel et al. (2001) reported an analysis of data from a representative sample of 15,686 students in Grades 6-10 in public and private schools throughout the U. S. who completed the World Health Organization’s Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey during the spring of 1998 (Nancel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). Their study addressed the prevalence of bullying by sex, grade, and race, and also explored the areas of psychosocial adjustment. Of the total respondents, 29.9% reported involvement with some type of moderate to frequent bullying either as the bully (13.0%), a target of a bully (10.6%), or both (6.3%). There were some demographic differences. Males both bullied others or were the victims of bullying more frequently than females. Bullying was more prevalent in Grades 6 through 8 than Grades 9 and 10. Hispanic students reported slightly higher involvement in moderate and frequent bullying of others, whereas black students reported slightly less involvement overall. There was no significant difference in the frequency of bullying between urban, suburban or rural students. Males reported more physical types of
bullying, such as being hit, slapped or pushed, while females reported being bullied more by sexual comments and rumors.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2009) compiles data on school crime and safety that includes information on bullying. In 2009, the center published the data presented in Figure 1. The report stated that bullying is a pervasive problem affecting millions of students and pointed out that a subgroup of bullied students have physical injuries such as a bruise, cut, or bloody nose. (NCES, 2009, Table 11.2)

![Students bullied and physically injured from bullying at school during 2007 school year](image)

*Note: (NCES, 2009, Table 11.2).*

**Figure 1. Students bullied and injured from bullying at school in 2007.**

Using information provided by the principal or the person most knowledgeable about crime at school, the NCES also reported that bullying is one of the most frequently reported discipline problems at school reported in 2005-06. Bullying peaked
in middle school with 43% of schools reporting problems with bullying, compared to 21% of elementary and 22% of secondary schools.

In 2005, a university, school district collaboration developed and tested a Web-based data collection system to assess bullying behavior. The test of the system collected data from 25,119 students in Grades 4-12 (62% of the target population), 2,231 staff, and 831 parents in 116 schools in the district (Bradshaw, Debnam, Martin, and Gill, 2006). The authors described it as “one of the largest systematic surveys of bullying ever conducted” (p. 6). Preliminary findings from this test of the system showed that approximately 58% of elementary, 74% of middle school, and 79% of high school students had witnessed bullying during the past month. About 26%-31% of all students reported “chronic” bullying (two or more times within the past month. Name calling was the most common form of bullying at all levels, followed by teasing, and rumors. For elementary students, being left out was cited by nearly 30%. The most common physical bullying involved pushing (about 23% to 32%) followed by hitting (about 18%-22%). They reported the most common reason for being bullied was “the way they look or talk” (p. 7). Despite the frequency of perceived bullying, 77% of students reported feeling safe at school and that they belong at their school (81%), but 58% of middle school and 66% of high school students wanted their school to do more to prevent bullying. (p. 7)

Surveys of School Principals

Another way to gain information on the nature and prevalence of school bullying is to survey school administrators. Harris and Hathorn (2006) surveyed a sample of
principals of middle and junior high schools in an area of South Texas. Eighty principals of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade schools were initially invited to respond. Fifty-nine principals participated resulting in a response rate of 73.75%. The purpose of the study was to assess the perceptions of middle school principals of bullying on their respective campuses. The researchers noted that prior to their study most data on bullying had been collected from student reports.

An important finding in this Texas middle school principal survey was that students and principals may see bullying differently. According to Harris and Hathorn (2006), most of the prior bullying research data came from student self-reports, and it showed that as many as 75% of the students reported bullying occurred on their campuses at least sometimes, whereas between 8% and 15% of the students indicated that it happened often. However, the principals in the study considered the schools very safe and that they were supportive of efforts to reduce bullying. They believed that their faculty were interested in stopping bullying ($M = 4.69$ on a 1-5 scale). Furthermore, 62.7% of the principals reported that they were never made aware of bullying taking place in the classrooms.

In the summer of 2007 an online survey of a representative national sample of public school principals was conducted, and a total of 1,580 K-12 principals responded. The random sample was drawn from three sources: the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the NCES, and a list from a membership-based National Education Association.

These principals identified bullying as a serious concern. Half (49%) of the principals believe that bullying, name-calling or harassment is a more serious problem
than peer pressure to use drugs and alcohol (27%), racial or ethnic differences (16%) or school violence (12%) in their respective schools. Only one-third (34%) of the principals believe that a majority of bullying and harassment incidents occurring at their schools come to their attention. When asked about the extent of cyberbullying, most principals (72%) report that students at their school engage in cyberbullying to some extent. Responses varied by the principal’s school level. Twenty percent (20%) of secondary principals reported students at their school frequently engaged in cyberbullying compared to one percent (1%) of elementary school principals (Markow & Dancewicz, 2007).

Cyberbullying: The New Way to Victimize

Bullying in schools is widespread, as evidenced by surveys cited previously. Bullying makes life very difficult for many stakeholders at school—both for the victims, the bully, and the adults who struggle to deal with the problem every day. Students today who are bullied cannot simply go home to avoid being bullied anymore. In this age of technology, students are often unable to escape bullying due to cyberspace communications (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999). Feinberg and Robey (2008) defined cyberbullying as sending or posting harmful text or images using the Internet or other digital devices such as cell phones. The types of bullying supported by the use of technology include instant messaging, emails, chat rooms, or social networking sites. This type of communication can involve “stalking threats, harassment, impersonation, humiliation, trickery, and exclusion” (p. 12).

The underlying nature of cyberbullying, that it has no bricks and mortar
boundaries, means that students may experience it whenever they have “access to their phones or a computer: at home, at a friend’s house, during school, and even on the bus or at the mall” (Feinberg & Robey, 2008, p. 11). Female students who use cyberbullying, “often act in groups, and they may feel justified in their attack on a weaker, less socially adept peer” (Feinberg & Robey, 2008, p. 14). Cyberbullying was used in the bullying of a teenage girl in Massachusetts who killed herself. Her mother later reported that her daughter, Phoebe, had no place to hide from the bullies (Bazelon, 2010).

The best information on the extent of cyberbullying is from the Youth Internet Safety Surveys which involved two telephone surveys about Internet victimization. Youth aged 10-17 were surveyed in 1999-2000 and five years later in 2004-2005. While it focused on online sexual solicitation and unwanted exposure to sexual material, the survey also addressed online harassment (i.e., threatening or other offensive behavior directed at them). Harassment, rather than cyberbullying, was used as a term in the report.

In the first survey, a national sample 1,501 youth participated in a telephone survey. Of those surveyed in 1999-2000, 6% reported harassment incidents where others posted or sent messages about them for others to see within the past year, while 2% reported episodes of harassment where the incident made them feel “very or extremely upset or afraid” (Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Wolak, 2006). The second survey of 1,500 youth showed that the rate of online harassment had increased from 6% to 9%; however the rate of “distressing” incidents remained at 3% (Finkelhor et al., 2006). The authors considered the increase in online harassment “unsettling” and noted that
families and schools may need to expand their bullying concerns to include online harassment. According to Finkelhor et al. (2006) “the number of incidents involving peers and the descriptions youth gave of these incidents, suggests that an amount of online harassment stems from confrontations that began in school” (p. 3).

Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak and Finkelhor (2006) reported results of the second survey conducted between March and June 2005. Respondents who reported harassment were asked for more detailed information including characteristics of the harasser and about the incident. Of those harassed, about a third reported “chronic” harassment (i.e. harassment that occurred three or more times in the previous year). When describing specific incidents, nearly half of the victims personally knew the harasser. Children who used the Internet for instant messaging, blogging, and chat rooms were more likely to be targets of harassment than those who did not, and youth who harassed others online were more likely to report being harassed.

Ybarra et al. (2006) reported that 26% visit chat rooms daily, 25% use IM every day, and 30% use the Internet for three or more hours per day. The survey found considerable bullying behaviors including, 24% e-mailed material that said hateful things about another person. Almost half of cyberbullying victims are also targets of traditional bullying. The victims are “generally more unpopular, isolated, depressed, anxious, and fearful than their peers” (Ybarra, et al., 2006). Research continues to look at bullying in schools in light of the new technology now available to allow the bullying of children even away from their schools. This technology has introduced a new way for the bully to harass his or her victim and it is important that legislators and school officials recognize that cyberbullying is another way for bullies to expand their hold on the psychological
health of their victim.

While supporting a concern about the extent of bullying, national data documenting the extent of bullying is limited. Statistics can vary from one study to another because of differences in survey populations, definitions of bullying behavior, research design, and date of the survey. Despite these limitations, the evidence remains. Bullying in this country is pervasive and widespread and can result in numerous negative ramifications ranging from the suicide of a child, to an increased dropout rate, poor academic performance, and a genuine fear of attending school.

The Bully, the Victim, and the Bully-victim: Who Are They?

Who Are The Bullies?

Bullying among school children is undoubtedly a very old problem. Throughout recent history, many individuals have been familiar with the “bully/victim problem,” but it was not until the 1970s that efforts were made to systematically study the problem. For several years most of the work was restricted to Scandinavia, especially Norway, where public attention was drawn to the problem after the suicides of bullied children and the Ministry of Education sponsored a national anti-bullying campaign (Olweus, 1996).

In the U. S. today we know that bullying affects a large percentage of the school population. In a study of adolescents in small town mid-western schools Hoover, Oliver, and Hazler (1992) found that 76.8% had experienced bullying at some point in their school careers. They went on to say that although it was difficult to draw a direct comparison, preliminary results indicated that victimization by bullies is more prevalent
in the U. S. than in European countries. Identifying a “typical” bully is challenging. Bullies come in all shapes and sizes; some are big, some small; some are attractive, some not; some are popular and some are widely disliked. Bullies are not identified by their looks, but rather their actions. To a casual observer they may appear to be only teasing, just pretending, or indulging in sibling rivalry. They are not. The bully is involved in serious acting with serious consequences for himself, the victim and the community (Coloroso, 2002).

While studies on the long-term consequences of bullying are limited, the studies that have been conducted show negative effects into adulthood (Nancel et al., 2001). Children who are bullies are more likely than other children to get into frequent fights, be hurt in fights, vandalize or steal other people’s property and be truant from school (Espelage et al., 2000; Olweus, 1993; Olweus et al., 1999). Bullies are also more likely to smoke and drink alcohol, drop out of school, and carry a weapon (Espelage et al., 2000; Olweus, 1993; Olweus et al., 1999).

Victims of Bullying

Much research has been focused on the victims of bullies and what causes one person over another to be the chosen victim of a bully (Nansel et al., 2001; National Middle School Association, 2001; Rigby, 2002). One national study showed that approximately 9% to 15% of any student population is victimized by bullying (Nansel et al., 2001). Nansel et al. (2001) surveyed more than 15,000 students, Grades 6 -10 and found that 10.6% of them had been bullied. Rigby (2002) reported that bullying is especially high at the middle-school level. Research has identified victims as being
physically and socially weaker than their peers (Rigby, 2002). Boys in middle school are more victimized than girls, even though research has shown that girls and boys are at equal risk (Nansel et al., 2001).

Many adolescents accept teasing, name-calling, and shoving as just playful pranks because their teachers have often ignored such behavior as a rite of passage in adolescence (Shakeshaft, Mandel, Johnson, Sawyer, Hergenrother, & Barber, 1997). Secretly, however, victims frequently blame themselves for the bullying, seeing themselves as stupid, unattractive, or failures (Malecki, 2003). Even while under the stress caused by being victimized daily by a bully, young people often discover that adults who should be protecting them, think that victims must learn to deal with the bully on their own, so the victim begins to feel caught in a helpless and hopeless situation (National Middle School Association, 2001).

*The Bully-victim*

Marini, Dane, and Volk (2010) defined a bully-victim as children who have been victims of bullies and who themselves have bullied others. The term is a recent one in the research literature; however, there is a significant amount of research on the problems associated with being a victim and with bullying other children. For example, children who are victims of bullying suffer from anxiety, depression, loneliness, and post-traumatic stress more than other children do. Children who bully are more likely to face peer rejection, conduct problems, anxiety, and academic difficulties.

Kohut (2007) has reported that there are a large number of children who have been a victim of a bully and have themselves bullied others in return. A recent study
found that one-third of children who either bullied others or were bullied themselves were identified as bully-victims. Research has identified the bully-victims as having the distinguishable feature of struggling to control their emotions (Kohut, 2007). Thus, bully-victims often prompt other children to bully them again by reacting emotionally to teasing, threats or physical aggression. Bully-victims often have problems controlling their anger, making it more likely that these children will seek revenge for any perceived injury (Kohut, 2007).

Children who can be considered bully-victims have more behavioral and emotional problems and exhibit the same type of symptoms most notable in victims: anxiety, depression, peer rejection, and no close friends. Bully-victims also exhibit traits of bullies: acceptance of rule-breaking, hyperactivity, and aggression that is often reactive (Kohut, 2007).

Bully-victims have been shown to be less responsive than other students with emotional problems to a comprehensive school program created to serve children with emotional problems. Meeting the needs of the bully-victim can be difficult. One problem faced is that it is often hard to recognize and attend to the needs of these children. Bully-victims often cause such disruptions in the classroom that their behavior is the thing teachers and parents concentrate most on. The bully-victim’s behavior is so overt that adults often overlook the internalizing problems that the bully-victim child may have, such as depression and anxiety. Kohut (2007) remarked that in order to help bully-victims, an equal amount of attention must be given to these children’s special needs.

The NCES (2001) reported on the National Crime Victimization Survey that was done with children from the ages of 12 through 18. The survey began with a very simple
question “Have you been bullied at school?” Participants were also asked if anyone had picked on them a lot or tried to coerce them into doing things they didn’t want to do, and if they felt rejected because other students have made fun of them, called them names, or excluded them from activities. The 2001 NCES study had interesting findings, including:

1. White, non-Hispanic students were more likely than Black, non-Hispanic students and other, non-Hispanic students to report being bullied.
2. Younger students were more likely than older students to report being bullied.
3. Differences were not detected between public and private school students’ reports of being bullied at school.
4. Students in schools where gangs were present were more likely to report being the victims of bullying.
5. Fewer students reported bullying in schools with supervision by police officers, security officers, or staff hallway monitors.
6. Victims of bullying were more likely to experience a criminal victimization at school.
7. Victims of bullying were more afraid of being attacked at school and elsewhere.
8. Victims of bullying were more likely to avoid certain areas of the school and certain activities out of fear of an attack.
9. Victims of bullying were more likely to report that they carried weapons to school and were engaged in physical fights.
10. Of those students who reported lower grades, victims of bullying were more likely to report receiving D's and F's than their non-bullied counterparts.

11. Fourteen percent of students reported being the victims of bullying.

12. Sex differences were not detected in most types of bullying. (p.11)

As previously noted, bullies cannot be identified by their appearance, but most definitely can be identified by their acts or behaviors. Bullies tend to demonstrate repetitive actions against specific targets, which are undergirded by an imbalance of power characterized by the victim being unable to defend themselves. The victim may cry, show withdrawal, fear or anguish while the bully may be devoid of emotion and show little or no empathy toward the victim. It is as if the victim deserved the aggressive treatment (Garrity et al., 2000).

Contextual Framework of Bullying

Researchers have now begun to realize that bullying includes bullies, their victims, bystanders, parents, teachers and other adults in the school, with all of these people making up an environment in the schools that can either eliminate or sustain bullying behavior (Solberg, Olweus, & Endresen, 2007). The acceptance that bullying is not an isolated or limited situation caused the state of Massachusetts to pass an anti-bullying law. The law was precipitated by the suicide of a 15-year-old girl after she had experienced constant bullying by classmates. The Massachusetts bill requires that schools develop and teach a curriculum that is targeted at stopping the type of harassment that student had experienced on a daily basis. The anti-bullying law covers bullying that takes place in school, on cell phones, or on the Internet—that is, bullying...
has been defined by the state of Massachusetts to include harassment that occurs even away from school in the bullied child’s home (Massachusetts Legislature, 2010).

Mah (2009) in *Getting beyond Bullying* reported that “teachers are able to create respectful classroom communities” where it is a joy to learn and teach (p. 4). Mah broke down the dynamics of bullying and discussed the functional definition of culture, and the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that promote survival. He reports that children need affirmative adult guidance, so that children’s differences do not create a social climate of bullying. Mah (2009) reported that:

> Ignorance and inexperience may lead to prejudice or worse: exclusion, sexism, racism, classism, bullyism (the practice of irrational force on a weak or supposed weak opponent to exercise power), ablism (discrimination in favor of the able-bodied; asserting people with disabilities as being unable), and so forth. (p. 5)

According to Mah (2009), “without affirmative adult guidance, children’s differences may activate problematic social dynamics, specifically exclusion and bullying” (p. 5). Mah used the chicken and the hawk theory to describe this bullying in the following way:

> The school officials were somewhat ambivalent about how much Eddie was being victimized. However, they admitted something was going on. Eddie’s days in preschool were not times of joyous exploration, social interaction, and academic stimulation. His calm immersion in playful exploration would be suddenly interrupted, as he caught a sudden movement or a discordant sound. What’s that? Is he coming this way? he would say silently to himself when he saw Mitchell look his way. Trying as hard as he could to become invisible, he could tell that it was happening . . . again. Please, not me again. How come not Bill? Or Juanita? Why me? Always me? Anxiously, he looked for the teachers. No luck. One was by the sink helping clean a mess. The other was in the corner reading to a small group of kids. They’re not looking! Don’t they know? Don’t they see it’s happening again? (p. 10)

Parsons (2003) reported that bullies become emboldened if they sense that a potential target is vulnerable. Mah (2009) argued that a victim of a bully can be easy to
recognize, even in a classroom full of children. The victim knows trouble as Mah (2009) described how the chicken spends its whole life learning how to recognize the hawk.

Bullied children, from an early age on through adulthood, are hypersensitive to their predators, the bullies. Bullying throughout the life span is a continuation of a childhood trauma. Mah (2009) reported that schools cannot just throw children together and assume a cohesive community will result. Inclusion puts children with others who may have aggressive to toxic emotional or behavioral energy—bullies or “mean” kids. Teachers and parents may deny the existence and actions of bullies or mean kids. They fail to prepare children to deal with such realities (Mah, 2009).

There is not a simple solution to address bullying or it would have been resolved years ago. Barriers such as, lack of consensus on a precise definition of bullying, who are the members of society responsible for teaching and enforcing prosocial behaviors, and the legislative priorities in each of the fifty states, all inhibit an effective and efficient solution (Olweus, 1993; Walsh, 1994). To add to the complexity of the problem, researchers are confident that bullying does not occur in isolation and that the “phenomenon is encouraged and/or inhibited as a result of the complex relationships between the individual, family, peer group, school, community, and culture” (Espelage & Swearer, 2004, p. 3).

The Role of Teachers

According to a nationwide study in Norway conducted by the Ministry of Education in 1983, students reported that teachers tried to do something about bullying on average about half of the time. According to the survey, nearly 65% of children in
primary grades who had been bullied reported that the teacher had not talked to them about bullying. The percentage of secondary students was even higher, with 85% stating that teachers did not talk to them about bullying. Therefore, it can be concluded that at least in 1983 relatively little was done to put a stop to bullying in Norwegian schools (Olweus, 1993).

In the United States, San Antonio and Salzfass (2007) surveyed 211 7th and 8th grade students in three K-8 schools in the spring of 2006. The study was designed to measure students’ experience with physical, verbal, and relational bullying. The schools differed significantly by race, socioeconomic status and ethnicity. The schools also varied in size and were entitled for the sake of the study - big city school, small city school, and rural school. Nearly all students in each grade were surveyed. Most students said that they were not confident that adults could protect them from being bullied. The rural school students had more confidence that the teachers would stop the bullying when it was brought to their attention than the students at the other two schools. However, students at all three schools agreed that teachers did not seem to notice bullying and did not take it seriously enough. Most students stated that they wanted teachers to be more cognizant of all types of bullying and to intervene more often.

The researchers concluded from their findings of the survey of the three middle schools that educators can influence the social and emotional climate of the school. Students’ written comments on the survey indicated that they value fairness, respectful communication, and adults who make them feel physically and socially safe (San Antonio & Salzfass, 2007).
The Role of Parents

Once again, referring to the Norwegian national study in 1983, only 55% of the primary students reported that “somebody at home” had talked to them, while in the secondary/junior high grades the percentage was reduced to 35%. Olweus (1993) makes the conclusion that “parents of students who are bullied and, in particular, who bully others, are relatively unaware of the problem and talk to their children about it on a limited basis” (p. 21). He concluded that these results do not specifically address the cause of bully / victim problems, yet they are important pieces of information when considering what counter-measures should be planned (Olweus, 1999).

Principals and Bullying

A few studies have examined the leadership role of a school principal in handling bullying at school. In a study to examine principals’ perceptions and practices regarding bullying prevention, Dake, Price, Telljohann, and Funk (2004) examined the perceptions and practices of elementary school principals about schoolwide practices recommended by the Norwegian Bullying Prevention Program. Dake et al. (2004) drew their national, random sample from the common core data of the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics. Surveys were sent to 700 selected elementary school principals, and 378 principals returned them for a response rate of 55%. The majority of those responding were female (57.7%), white (85.4%), and from urban schools (61.6%).
Results of the study showed that components of the whole-school approach to bullying, described in the last section of this chapter, were rarely implemented in elementary schools. Principals reported that barriers to bullying prevention were a result of bullying having a lower priority than other problems in the school, their own lack of training in how to deal with bullying, and a lack of resources.

In reporting their perceptions of the problem of bullying in their own schools, 98% of the respondents perceived the extent of bullying in their schools to be less than in other U.S. elementary schools. Principals also perceived that postbullying activities, such as office referrals, suspensions, and parent conferences were the most effective means of reducing bullying, followed by increased student supervision.

Dake et al. (2004) suggested that based on the findings in their study, principals need to be educated about the magnitude of bullying problems in elementary schools. Principals also need training in methods to reduce bullying, and they concluded that very few elementary schools had implemented any anti-bullying programs that have been shown to reduce bullying.

In 2007, Markow and Dancewicz also explored the perspectives of elementary and secondary public school principals throughout the U. S. on student bullying, harassment and the programs, policies and training that these principals had instituted in their schools to address the issues of bullying. Survey participants were drawn from three different sources: a list from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP); a list from a membership-based national education organization; and, a list from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). The survey was self-administered through the Internet. There were a total of 1,580 kindergarten through
Grade 12 public school principals who had Internet access to the survey. The survey took approximately 27 minutes to take.

There were many significant and major findings in the study. The following are the most significant findings in the study as provided by GLSEN and Harris Interactive (2008):

1. Half of all principals surveyed reported that bullying, name-calling and harassment of students is a serious problem at their school. In fact, 49% of principals found bullying to be a more serious problem than peer pressure to use alcohol or drugs.

2. Principals at all levels reported that students were harassed because of the way they looked or the size of their body. Elementary principals reported that elementary students were harassed for how masculine or feminine they were.

3. Approximately 45% of principals believe that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) students would feel very safe at their schools, while more than half of the principals believe that students from racial or religious minority groups would feel safe at their schools.

4. Most principals have heard students make sexist or homophobic remarks and have heard students use the expression “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay.”

5. Students that have LGBT family or parents face challenges in achieving safety at school or feeling welcome at school.

6. Most principals reported speaking to the bully and victim after incidents of harassment, but most principals believe that the majority of bullying incidents never come to their attention.
7. Almost all of the principals reported that their school and school district have a “safer school” policy or anti-bullying policy. Only 2 in 10 principals reported that their schools had implemented safety programs for LGBT students.

8. Principals indicated a need for professional development for all teachers and staff in order to reduce the harassment of LGBT students.

9. Most principals also believe that administrators would support efforts that specifically address issues of harassment of LGBT students and their families. Principals also reported that they thought other members of the school community would not be as supportive. (p. 17)

Stein (1999) conducted research in collaboration with Education Equity Concepts which was funded by the U. S. Department of Education under the Women’s Educational Equity Act Project and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act. This research was a pilot study with a small number of elementary schools in New York City and Farmingham, Massachusetts. However, the results mirrored Olweus’ findings. They found that the responses and attitudes of the adults in the school had a major impact on the extent of bullying that took place. They identified distinct trends in three of the four elementary schools with the principal’s leadership style and responses playing a significant role in the teacher’s responses to student’s bullying and teasing. Subsequently, they observed that teachers set the climate in the classroom resulting in an impact on the incidences of teasing and bullying.

Implementation of Anti-bullying Policies

In England schools are required to have anti-bullying policies. To determine how
the required policies were being implemented, Smith, Smith, Osborn, and Samara (2008) analyzed 142 school anti-bullying policies in England from 115 primary schools and 27 secondary schools. Smith et al. (2008) used a 31-item scoring scheme to assess policy at these schools, and they found that schools had approximately 40% of the required anti-bullying policies in their schools. Most of the policies covered improvement in the school climate; a definition of bullying that included physical, verbal, and relational forms, and statements regarding contacting parents when bullying does occur. Most of the responsibility for monitoring the students was done by teaching staff with little help from other staff members. There was little difference between policies in primary and secondary schools.

Programs to Prevent Bullying

This section examines specific programs designed to prevent bullying in schools, addresses the inconclusive findings about the whole-school approach to anti-bullying programs, and examines research on other anti-bullying initiatives.

Various sources have examined research on anti-bullying programs to identify “best practices” for preventing or reducing school bullying. Interventions that are effective with other kinds of violence may not work to prevent bullying. For example, conflict resolution, peer mediation strategies, and group therapy focusing on building self-esteem have been shown to be relatively ineffective because bullying results from power imbalance rather than deficits in social skills (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Research on other programs has shown that the most effective school-based programs go beyond focus on individual children to address change in school climate
and culture. Results of several studies show that bullying prevention strategies must include several levels: “school-level interventions to change overall culture and climate; classroom-level interventions targeting teachers and adults in the school; and student-level interventions that target individual or small groups of victims and bullies” (Whitted & Dupper, 2005, p. 169). Schools that adopt specific anti-bullying programs will be more successful if they implement the entire program as designed rather than implementing some parts.

A guide for schools and communities published by the state of Maine included information about bullying interventions that work, do not work, or make bullying worse.

What does not work includes single classroom interventions without school wide planning and coordination, telling the whole student body to “be kind” as a primary intervention, nonspecific rules such as “be respectful,” creating consequences on the spot so that children doing the same thing get different consequences, focusing on changing the one bully without school wide intervention, inconsistent adult reactions, rules that are inappropriate or too broad, words without actions, and implementing programs without training staff. School actions that make bullying worse are those that treat target/victim training as the primary intervention, mediation, blaming the victim, encouraging victims to be more confident without giving them appropriate protection, zero-tolerance approaches leading to immediate large consequences, and asking for reports without protecting against retaliation. Interventions that work are school-wide programs that focus on climate and are centrally directed with coordinating committees, bystander empowerment and training, specific school wide definition of unacceptable behavior and consequences in a context of strong staff-student connection and positive tone, and school-parent-student collaboration (Maine’s Best Practices in Bullying and Harassment Prevention, n. d., 34-35).

Descriptions of multi-level approaches have several common elements including school wide efforts to change the school’s climate and culture, collection of objective data about bullying and evaluation of anti-bullying efforts, formation of school wide committees to oversee change efforts, formal policies that are consistently enforced, and training for all school personnel and parents. Whitted and Dupper (2005) note that
classroom-level components led by teachers and other school personnel include:

Regular classroom meetings that discuss bullying, involvement of students in developing rules; integration of the concept of bullying into the curriculum; encouragement of reporting of bullying incidents, and adult communications of appropriate behavior. Student-level components include actions such as teaching victims social and problem solving skills, establishing support systems for victims, reinforcement of pro-social behavior, and training bystanders in how to respond to stop bullying. (p. 170)

Whole-school Anti-bullying Programs

As described earlier in this chapter, research has indicated that bullying is complex and often supported by peers, adults in the school, and home environment. Thus addressing bullying may require more than interventions with individual bullies or victims. The "whole-school" approach to prevention of bullying was developed under the assumption that bullying is a systemic problem that must be directed at the entire school. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus, 1993) was the first whole-school problem implemented on a large scale and systematically evaluated. This program was implemented in Norway after a 1982 incident in which three young adolescents killed themselves after months of being repeatedly bullied at school. The media coverage and public outrage led to a nationwide anti-bullying campaign. Olweus (1999) developed a program that was implemented in Norwegian schools. The critical elements of the Olweus program included: sensitizing all members of the school community (staff, students, parents) with basic information about what bullying is and how they should respond to it; implementation of a clear, consistent policy involving nonphysical consequences for bullying; curricular activities designed to instill anti-bullying attitudes in all children and help them learn conflict development skills; and
creating individualized interventions for children involved as victims or as bullies
(Ferguson, San Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez, 2007; Smith, Schneider, Smith, &
Ananiadou, 2004).

The implementation of the Norwegian program in Bergen was evaluated over a
two year period and included data about 2,500 students in 42 primary and lower
secondary schools (i.e., junior highs) (Olweus, 1993). At the start of the evaluation, the
2,500 students were enrolled in 112 classes in Grades 5-8 and were aged 11, 12, 13,
and 14. The evaluation results showed that the program had the following positive
results: A substantial reduction (50%) in student’s reports of bullying and victimization; a
reduction in general antisocial behavior, like truancy, shoplifting, and alcohol use;
improvements in what is termed the “social climate” of the classroom as measured by
students’ reports of improved discipline at school; and student self-reports that they felt
more positive about their schoolwork and their school (Olweus, 1993). These findings
were replicated and expanded in two other studies by Olweus and in evaluations of his
programs in other countries (Olweus, 1999).

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is now well-developed and is promoted
in the U. S. through the Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life at Clemson
University. The program website identifies four sets of program components that require
schools to take specific steps. There are eight school-level activities such as creating
coordinating committees, administering a data collection questionnaire, staff training,
parent involvement, and school rules against bullying. This element also includes
holding a school kick-off event to launch the program. Individual-level components
require staff to intervene “on the spot” when bullying occurs, meet with students
involved in bullying and their parents, and develop individual intervention plans for students. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has been implemented in over a dozen countries world-wide and in more than 5,000 schools in the United States.

However, a rigorous review of evaluation studies that examined the effect sizes of the specific outcomes of reduction in the amount of bullying and victimization, did not find the same success rates. Smith et al. (2004) synthesized research on whole-school anti-bullying programs to determine if they were effective in reducing bullying and victimization. After an extensive review, they identified 14 studies that met the criteria of being a systematic evaluation of a whole-school anti-bullying program, providing quantitative outcome data on victimization or bullying and conducted in more than one classroom. Comparison of evaluation results was difficult, as program integrity varied, not all studies used control groups, measures varied, and self-report of bullying and victimization rather than objective data were used. Smith et al. (2004) concluded:

It is clear that the whole school approach has led to important reductions in bullying in a number of cases, but the results are simply too inconsistent to justify adoption of these procedures to the exclusion of others. The widespread enthusiasm for the whole-school approach, and its enactment into law in some jurisdictions, can be based only on the perceived urgent need to intervene and on the few studies indicating success. (p. 557)

They suggest that the initial success of the Olweus program may relate to the high quality of Scandinavian schools, or could be related to the historical context of implementation in Norway after widely publicized suicides of bullied children. They also noted that the Olweus program may need to have all elements in place to be effective, and programs that modify the model may be ineffective. They also note that even the insignificant results found may “reflect a reasonable rate of return on the investment inherent in low-cost, non-stigmatizing” programs, and the significance of even small
effects in addressing a difficult problem should not be dismissed (Smith et al., 2004, p. 557).

Other Anti-bullying Programs

While the Olweus model is widely used and discussed, other models have been advanced. They include the Second Step Violence Prevention Program, a classroom-based program that has had some success in reducing antisocial-behavior (Taub, 2001) and aggression (Van Schoiack-Edstrom, Frey, & Beland, 2002). Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RIPP) teaches social skills and how to respond to conflict (Farrell, Meyer, & White, 2001). Another approach, a restorative justice model, is designed to restore the relationship between the victim and the bully (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006). Other programs build upon research on individual coping mechanisms to help children and adolescents cope with aggression (Gini, 2006). Anti-bullying programs can include a variety of elements ranging from conflict-resolution pedagogy to individual accountability for bullying.

Ferguson et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of randomized experimental studies of school-based anti-bullying programs where the research design met criteria for quality of methodology. The studies measured outcomes with some element of bullying behavior or aggression toward peers. They included 42 studies published in peer-reviewed journals. The combined sample size for the articles was 34,713. Their analysis showed that all programs had positive and significant effects, but the effect sizes were very small. They estimated the impact of the programs ranged from less than 1% for low-risk children to 3.6% for high risk children. They concluded that the
school-based anti-bullying programs in their study were not “practically effective” in reducing bullying or violent behavior in schools. Possible explanations for the disappointing result is that bullies find bullying advantageous in maintaining their status among others and are not motivated to change; and that antisocial behavior may involve genetic influences that are more resistant to intervention than learned behavior. Finally they suggested that the programs are being implemented at a time when school violence has already decreased significantly, and violent behavior has hit a “floor effect.”

Elledge, Cavell, Ogle, and Newgent (2010) examined the benefits of a school-based lunch time mentoring program for bullied children. Participants in the program were 36 4th and 5th graders who had been identified as having been bullied. The children in the program were matched with a college-student mentor who visited twice each week during one spring semester. The results of the study showed that lunch-buddy children experienced greater reductions in bullying victimization. Both lunch-buddy children and the mentor reported that the experience had been a positive one, and both teachers and parents were pleased with the lunch buddy mentoring program. Elledge et al. (2010) reported that more such programs need to be implemented, especially in elementary schools, because such programs empower children who are bullied to report the bullying.

Summary

The bullying of children at school and in cyberspace has become a national concern, and schools are expected to take steps to prevent it. As noted in Chapter 1 most states have passed laws requiring some level of school action to address bullying.
Survey data show that bullying is widespread, with estimated percentages ranging from 42.9% of 6th graders to 23.5% of seniors bullied at school. In 2004-2005, 9% of school students experienced cyberbullying; however, the percentage had increased 50% from a study conducted 5 years earlier, and, given recent publicity, may be assumed to impact even more students in 2011.

While schools are expected to take action, there is little evidence of what steps public schools are taking to prevent bullying. Data from two principal surveys reported in 2004 and 2007 suggests that by 2007 principals were more aware of the problem of bullying at their schools, and schools or school districts were likely to have a safe school or anti-bullying policy.

The literature includes reports of anti-bullying programs implemented in individual schools, and various anti-bullying programs are available. However, evidence of their effectiveness is disappointing.
CHAPTER 3
OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

The literature review provided a framework of the background and best practices in anti-bullying policies and procedures. The framework was used in the development of a survey instrument that identifies current policies and practices in middle schools in Texas. The survey sample and process are described in this chapter.

Research Context

The focus of this study was on the attitudes of middle school principals in Texas with regard to bullying, in addition to the identification of measures that have been implemented in order to prevent bullying in middle schools and to introduce the best practices. The review of the literature showed that within the United States (U. S.), bullying has been found to be a pervasive and widespread problem which may result in a number of negative effects, including a higher dropout rate, poor academic performance, a fear of attending school, and even suicide. As bullying of children, both within school and online has become a significant national concern, it would be expected that schools would take any necessary steps to prevent its occurrence.

While most states have passed legislation requiring some level of school action to address bullying, recent surveys show that bullying remains a widespread problem in schools in the U. S. Cyberbullying has increased on a percentage wise basis in recent years. Despite these facts, there is little evidence that schools have taken much direct action regarding the prevention of bullying. The research that was conducted on more substantial anti-bullying programs showed little evidence of their effectiveness.
The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore what Texas principals know about the issue of bullying, as well as to determine what district and campus policies and practices are currently in place to prevent its occurrence. By focusing upon these areas, this study aimed to expand the current literature on bullying in the U. S. as well as to gain insight into principals’ knowledge of bullying, and current policies and practices in order to explore more specifically the extent to which bullying is in fact considered a serious issue within schools and by principals. In addition, this study was to determine whether the current district and campus policies and prevention programs in place reflect what has been validated in the literature as best practices. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What direct experience have the middle school principals had with bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?
2. What district and campus policies and practices are in place to address bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?
3. What prevention programs do campuses have in place with regard to bullying and peer-to-peer sexual harassment?

Identifying the Sample

For the purpose of this study, the population and sample consisted of all middle school principals in the state of Texas. The targeted grade levels were Grades 5 through 8. The following is a breakdown of the entities sampled:

- Sixth Grade Centers: 16
The population of Texas principals in the identified schools was 1,252 in the 2010-2011 school-year. The survey was administered in May and early June when schools are preparing to close for the summer; hence, the response rate was 10%. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) was contacted in order to obtain the email addresses of all middle school principals in Texas. The agency recommended the use of AskTED© (www.askted.com), the online Texas Education Directory. Access to AskTED© is through the directory link on most TEA web pages. It is designed for general public use to find contact information for Texas public schools. Before the survey was administered, email addresses were verified in order to ensure accuracy. From the 1,252 email addresses, 279 came back and 18 were corrected. Email messages were sent to the principals three times requesting participation in the study. The total revised number of emails sent was 991. Ninety-nine principals responded to the email with a response rate of 10%.

Survey Monkey™ (www.surveymonkey.com), a service that allows a user to develop and administer web-based surveys, was used to administer the survey. Initially,
the survey questions and allowed responses were entered online using the Survey Monkey™ website. The list of email addresses was entered into the website and an email containing an introductory paragraph describing the study, as well as a link to the survey itself was sent to all respondents. Additional follow-up email messages were sent as necessary to those respondents who did not initially respond or who did not fully complete the survey.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument used was an online questionnaire developed for this study. The advantages of online survey research include lower cost compared to other methods; the wide access to geographically dispersed samples; reduced biasing error; anonymity for respondents; and more time to consider, answer, or consult with other sources (Frankfort-Nachmias, 2000). The development process of the survey consisted of writing and revisions based on the consultation with the dissertation major professor, committee members, the University of North Texas (UNT) Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Analysis (CIRA), and practitioners in public education. A panel of experts consisting of three principals reviewed the survey for face validity, clarity, and ease of use. One member of the panel of experts had served as treasurer and vice-president of the Texas Middle School Association and was designated a Texas middle school mentor principal. A central office administrator and former principal who supervised all principals in a large urban district reviewed the survey for both content and ease of understanding and use. The first response was received on May 13 and the last response was received on July 4. The survey instrument consisted of 40 questions that
included items requesting demographic information about the school and questions about the district and campus policies and procedures related to bullying and middle school principals’ understanding of bullying (See Survey in Appendix A).

The UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved the research proposal, questionnaire, and procedures for maintaining confidentiality of information.

Data Analysis

All analyses were conducted using STATA® Data Analysis and Statistical Software (http://www.stata.com). Descriptive statistics for all items were computed in order to better describe the sample and to assess the data for any errors that might have occurred during the collection and processing. The research questions that guided this study are provided below along with a description of the analyses that were conducted to test them.

1. What direct experience have the middle school principals had with bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?

This research question focused on the direct experience, if any, Texas middle school principals have with regard to bullying and peer-to-peer harassment. This research question explored the findings using descriptive statistics. Measures such as the mean/median, standard deviation, and range were used to describe the corresponding survey questions which constitute continuous variables, while descriptive statistics such as the median, mode and 25th and 75th percentiles were utilized in order to describe the corresponding survey questions which constitute categorical variables. The calculation and presentation of these descriptive statistics served to fully explore the
experiences of Texas middle school principals regarding bullying and peer-to-peer harassment.

The second and third research questions were as follows:

2. What district and campus policies and practices are in place to address bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?

3. What prevention programs do campuses have in place with regard to bullying and peer-to-peer sexual harassment?

These two research questions focused on the campus policies and prevention programs in place within schools addressing bullying and peer-to-peer harassment, including sexual harassment. Similar to the first research question, these two research questions were explored using descriptive statistics. As before, the appropriate set of descriptive statistics were conducted and presented depending on whether the variables in question were continuous or categorical.
Bullying in American schools is on the increase. Some well publicized cases in which bullied children committed suicide have increased attention to bullying and its prevention. The specific problem of this study was to determine what experience middle school principals are having with bullying in their schools and what policies, procedures, and programs to address bullying are in effect in their schools. To review, the three research questions in this study were:

1. What direct experience have middle school principals had with bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?

2. What district and campus policies and practices are in place to address bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?

3. What prevention programs do campuses have in place with regard to bullying and peer-to-peer sexual harassment?

The first section provides descriptive information about the respondents and their schools and the principals’ perception of the learning environment at their schools. Following this, three additional sections present the data for the three research questions. Finally, an additional section is presented focusing on challenges faced by respondents with regard to bullying.
Characteristics of the Principals and Their Schools

There were 99 questionnaires received from Texas middle school principals. The response rate was 10%.

School Demographics and Principals’ Perception of School Safety

This section presents descriptive information about the respondents, school demographics, respondents' perception of their schools' safety, and self reports of the amount of bullying on campus. Table 1 shows the positions held by respondents. Although the survey was directed to principals, a few principals delegated the responsibility of completing the questionnaire to others. As shown, the vast majority of respondents, nearly 95%, served as principals. The respondents are referred to as "principals" in the text. Only 3% of respondents were assistant principals, while 2% of individuals in this sample had an alternate position.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator. Slightly over one quarter of respondents spent between 1 and 5 years working in an administrative position, with slightly over one third of respondents having worked in an
administrative position between 6 and 10 years in total. Finally, close to 40% of individuals had over 10 years of experience working in an administrative position.

Table 2

*Time in Administrative Position*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5 Years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Years</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 Years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39.39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the number and percentage of students enrolled in the respondent’s school. Schools were grouped into four categories for the purposes of this analysis. The mean enrollment was 639.970 students, with a standard deviation of 349.154.

Table 3

*Student Enrollment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 400</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401 to 800</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>801 to 1200</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1201 to 1600</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows the distribution of schools by grade levels included in the their school. Respondents were asked to identify every grade level from 5th to 9th so the *n* in this table exceeds the number of respondents. Nearly 96% of respondents reported that
their school included 7th and 8th grade classes, while close to 75% of respondents worked within schools which included 6th grade classes. Only a small proportion of respondents were employed in schools that had 5th or 9th grade classes. Specifically, 8% of respondents reported that their school included a 5th grade, while 6% of respondents stated that their school included a 9th grade. The predominant school configuration for this group was Grades 6-8.

Table 4

*Grade Level Distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Yes n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th Grade</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.08%</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73.74%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95.96%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95.96%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Grade</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93.94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows the distribution of schools designated as Title or non-Title I schools. In this study, the school’s Title I status represents the socio-economic status of the students. According to the U. S. Department of Education, a school qualifies for Title I funds if at least 40% of students are enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program (Green, 2009). The majority of respondents, slightly over two thirds, reported that their school was a Title I school.
Table 5

*Title I*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>67.35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Safe School Environment*

The overarching charge of school administrators is to ensure a safe learning environment. This directive is found in federal law as well as state and district rules and regulations. The increase in bullying in recent years has contributed to the challenge for administrator’s attempting to adhere to this mandate and expectation.

Table 6 shows that the majority of respondents felt that their school was either “adequate” or “good” with regard to being physically safe and providing a healthy learning environment for all students and adults. Nearly 18% of respondents rated their school’s physical safety as “very good,” while only two respondents felt that their school was “poor” or “very poor.” The profile for emotional/social safety was slightly different, with 60% finding it “acceptable” while an additional 19% felt that their school was “good.” Over 16% of respondents rated their school as “very good,” while only three respondents felt that their school was “poor” or “very poor” in the context of emotional and social safety.
Table 6

School Safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physically Safe</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35.90%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>43.59%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Safe</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.85%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>60.26%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19.23%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows the number of verified acts of bullying that were recorded on respondents’ school campuses for the 2009-2010 school year. The mean number of verified acts of bullying was 14.80, with a standard deviation of 12.18. Next, respondents were asked to compare the amount and seriousness of bullying in their school compared to other schools. These results are summarized in the following table. With regard to both of these questions, the vast majority of respondents felt that the amount and seriousness of bullying experienced in their schools is approximately the same as other schools. Additionally, some schools, less than 10% in each case, felt that the amount and seriousness of bullying which takes place in their school was either less or more than in other schools.
Table 7

Reports of Bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>More</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.97%</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>83.33%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriousness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.13%</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>91.03%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principals’ Experience With Bullying

Research Question 1: What direct experience have middle school principals had with bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?

There were 12 items designed to answer this question. Respondents were asked to identify the frequency they experienced each bullying or peer-to-peer harassment item on a scale of 1 “never or almost never” to 5 “frequently.”

Table 8 shows principals’ perceptions of their level of preparation to deal with both in-school bullying and cyberbullying. The majority felt that their preparation, both in-school bullying and cyberbullying was “acceptable.” The profile for cyberbullying is interesting. While only four respondents in total felt that their preparation for in-school bullying was “poor” or “very poor”, nearly 16% felt that their preparation to deal with cyberbullying was “poor” or “very poor.” At the opposite extreme, over 16% rated their preparation to deal with cyberbullying as “very good.”
Table 8

*Preparation of Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-School Bullying</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
<td>4 5.13%</td>
<td>54 69.23%</td>
<td>14 17.95%</td>
<td>6 7.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyberbullying</td>
<td>3 3.85%</td>
<td>9 11.54%</td>
<td>42 53.85%</td>
<td>11 14.10%</td>
<td>13 16.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bullying Reports*

Table 9 shows principals’ perceptions of how often parents contact them with concerns about bullying of their child. A slight majority of respondents indicated that parents contact them with concerns about bullying of their child ‘sometimes,” with 33% of respondents stating that this happens “often” and 4% “frequently.” Only approximately 12% of respondents stated that this happens “rarely,” with no respondents indicating that this “never happens.” A large majority of principals are being contacted by parents about this issue.
Table 9

*Parents Report Concerns about Bullying*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 summarizes principals’ perceptions of the frequency that parents report concerns that their child is subjected to cyberbullying by other students. Within the context of this study, cyberbullying was defined as students being teased, insulted, threatened, or subjected to malicious statements via the Internet, cell phones, or texting by other students. Students often experience cyberbullying when they are away from school. Parents contact the school about cyberbullying less often than about in-school bullying. Nearly half of respondents stated that parents report cyberbullying concerns “sometimes,” while close to 20% chose “often.” Only 2% indicated that parents “frequently” report concerns that their child is being subjected to cyberbullying. In addition, close to 30% of respondents stated that this “rarely” happened, and 2% indicated that parents “never” report concerns that their child is being subjected to cyberbullying.
Table 10

*Parents Report Cyberbullying Concerns*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 shows the frequency at which children report bullying to an adult at school. The majority of respondents, nearly 62%, stated that this happens “sometimes,” while close to 31% reported that this happens “often.” A mere 2% of respondents stated that children “frequently” report bullying to an adult at school, while 5% felt that this was “rare,” and no respondents indicated that children “never” report bullying to an adult at school. Students’ reports track fairly closely with those of their parents. A higher percentage of principals felt that they were contacted by parents “frequently” and “often” than by students.
Table 11

*Children Reporting Bullying*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 summarizes the extent to which girls are bullied by other girls. The majority of respondents stated that this happens “sometimes,” with close to 20% indicating that this is “rare.” Smaller percentages of respondents stated that this happens “frequently,” “often,” or “never.”

Table 12

*Direct Experience: Girls Bullied by Other Girls*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13 shows perceptions of the frequency at which girls experience sexual harassment from one or more boys. Slightly over 53% of the respondents thought that sexual harassment “rarely” occurs, with a single respondent stating that it “never happens.” A substantial proportion of respondents, over 40%, indicated that sexual harassment “sometimes” occurs in their school, but no respondents indicated that sexual harassment “frequently” occurs. Bullying among girls appears to be much more prevalent than sexual harassment of girls by boys.

Table 13

**Sexual Harassment of Girls**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 shows principals’ perceptions of the amount of bullying between boys. Again, the majority of respondents indicated that this happens “sometimes,” while an additional 20% stated that this happens “often.” Less than 10% indicated that bullying between boys was “rare,” with less than 5% indicating that this happens “frequently” or “never.” Bullying among boys is perceived to happen “often” by over twice as many principals as bullying among girls.
Table 14

*Boys Bullied by Boys*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 focuses on bullying between members of different ethnic groups. Fewer principals report bullying among ethnic groups than among boys and girls. However, bullying between ethnic groups was reported more often than sexual harassment. The majority of respondents indicated that this happens “sometimes,” with an additional 22% indicating that this happens “rarely.” Nearly 15% stated that this “never” happens, while a minimal number of respondents indicated that bullying between members of different ethnic groups happens “often” or “frequently.”

Table 15

*Bullying between Members of Different Ethnic Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>57.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students are being bullied because of their appearance less often than for ethnic differences. Table 16 shows the majority of principals felt students were bullied because of appearance “rarely,” with an additional 25% stating that this “sometimes” happens. Less than 10% of respondents reported that students being bullied because of their appearance happened “often” or “never,” with no respondents indicating that this type of bullying “frequently” happens.

Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Bullied Because of Appearance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 shows respondents’ perceptions of the frequency that students are bullied because they are considered “gay.” Approximately 63% felt this “rarely” occurred, while nearly 13% indicated that this “never” happens. Additionally, 23% of individuals thought that this happens “sometimes,” while only a single respondent stated that students are “often” bullied because they are considered “gay.” No respondents indicated that this happens “frequently.” GBLT students are a subset of the student population, so it might be expected that bullying related to sexual orientation occurs less often than bullying in general. Slightly over 75% of the principals felt students are bullied
because of perceived sexual orientation “rarely” or “never.” However, the fact that almost 23% of the respondents believed it happened “sometimes,” is evidence that this type of bullying can be a threat in the life of some middle school students and should not be ignored.

Table 17

_Bullying of Gay Students_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18 summarizes the responses about the frequency that students with disabilities are bullied. Children with disabilities are a minority of the student population. Almost two-thirds reported that students with disabilities are “rarely” bullied in their schools, and 15% indicated that students with disabilities are “never” bullied. While no respondents indicated that this occurred “frequently” or “often,” close to 20% of respondents stated that this happens “sometimes.” However, almost 20% reported that it does occur “sometimes” which is evidence that bullying is present in the world of the middle school student with disabilities.
Table 18

*Bullying of Students with Disabilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>65.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19 shows respondents’ perceptions of the frequency at which teachers raise concerns about bullying at school. Nearly 65% reported that this happens “sometimes.” 14% indicated “often,” and only 2% chose “frequently.” Close to 20% of respondents believed that teachers “rarely” raise concerns about bullying at school, while only a single respondent stated that this “never” happens.

Table 19

*Teachers Raise Concerns*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>64.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

The 99 Texas middle school principals responding to the survey reported considerable direct experience with all bullying categories in their schools. Both parents and students report bullying incidents to them as do teachers, though not as often. Over half of the respondents felt that their preparation for dealing with in-school bullying and cyberbullying was only “acceptable.”

District Policies and Practices

The Texas Education Code and Texas Penal Code contain a number of provisions that pertain to bullying and harassment. Texas Education Code § 37.001(a) (7) requires all school districts to adopt a student code of conduct that prohibits “bullying, harassment, and making hit lists.” School districts must adopt and implement a discipline management plan that includes the prevention of “unwanted physical or verbal aggression, sexual harassment, and other forms of bullying in school, on school ground and in school vehicles” (Texas Education Code § 37.001 (a) (7); Childress, 2011). This provision does not address cyberbullying (Childress, 2011).

Texas law provides definitions for bullying and harassment. Bullying is defined as “engaging in written and verbal expression or physical conduct that a school district board of trustees or the board’s designee determines: (1) will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student’s property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student’s person or of damage to the student’s property; or (2) is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student.”
(Texas Education Code § 37.001 (a) (7); Childress, 2011). The Education Code defines harassment as threatening to cause harm or bodily injury to another student, engaging in sexually intimidating conduct, casing physical damage to the property of another student, subjecting another student to physical confinement or restraint, or maliciously taking any action that substantially harms another student’s physical or emotional health or safety” (Texas Education Code § 37.001(b) (1)). Current Texas law provides the opportunity for a victim to transfer to another classroom or campus. Under Texas Education Code § 25.0342, the victim must request the transfer from the board or the board’s designee. In addition, the district is not required to provide transportation for the victim to another campus (Childress, 2011).

Research Question 2: What campus policies are in place to address bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?

Five questions were asked about policies concerning bullying and peer-to-peer harassment. Table 20 shows whether the respondents' district has a written bullying policy. As shown, the majority of principals (80%) thought that their districts did have a written bullying policy as required by state law, while the remaining 20% did not.

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written Bullying Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>n</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 21 identifies the frequency that the principal thought their district’s campus bullying policy includes a definition of bullying, information about how students can report concerns about bullying, and information on procedures for faculty and staff to report concerns about bullying. Most commonly, a district-level policy has a definition of bullying. This was true in slightly over 75% of cases. Next, close to 70% of respondents stated that their district’s campus bullying policy included information about how students can report concerns about bullying. Finally, slightly over 60% of respondents reported that information for faculty and staff to report concerns about bullying was included in their district’s campus bullying policy.

Table 21

*Components of District’s Campus Bullying Policy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Bullying</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>76.77%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info for Students to Report</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68.69%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info for Faculty/Staff to Report</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60.61%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39.39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*School Practices to Address Bullying*

Table 22 shows the frequency that bullying incidents are reported in the yearly campus disciplinary report to the district. This was done in the majority of cases (nearly 70%), while slightly over 30% of respondents indicated that bullying incidents are not reported in the yearly campus disciplinary report.
Table 22

*Incidents Reported in the Yearly Campus Disciplinary Report*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>69.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23 summarizes responses about where the district’s bullying policy can be found. Respondents were asked to identify all that apply among the following: School Board Policy Manual (hardcopy or online), the staff/faculty handbook, the student handbook, the parent handbook, posted in hallways/cafeteria/classroom/other public areas of the school, the district’s website, and other locations. The most common locations were the student handbook (73%), the school board policy manual (66%), and the staff/faculty handbook (53%). Less common locations included the district’s website (39%), the parent handbook (26%), having the policy posted in public areas (20%), and other locations (5%). Among the schools in districts with a written policy, information appeared to be available in multiple locations.
Table 23

Location of Copies of District’s Bullying Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Handbook</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72.73%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Board Policy Manual</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65.66%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/Faculty Handbook</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53.54%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District’s Website</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38.38%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Handbook</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26.26%</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted in Public Areas</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.20%</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principals were asked how students are notified about the process by which they may make anonymous reports of acts of bullying. They were asked to identify all of the following methods of informing students at their school: Student handbook, a student handout, an assembly, a classroom presentation, and an option indicating that students were not informed (i.e., that no anonymous reporting process exists). As shown in Table 24, a majority, approximately 56%, indicated that students are notified about the process by which they may make anonymous reports of bullying in their student handbook. Between 40% and 50% of respondents indicated that an assembly or a classroom presentation is used in order to notify students. Only 14% said that a student handout was used, while 10% stated that students were not informed regarding the process by which they may make anonymous reports of bullying. It appears that schools inform students about the reporting procedures in more than one way.
Table 24

*How Students are Notified about the Reporting Process for Bullying*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Handbook</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Presentation</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46.46%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42.42%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Handbook</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.14%</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Informed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.10%</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 25-27 show the responses to the questions about how bullying is addressed when it occurs and how often stakeholders are surveyed about bullying. The first question asked the frequency that individual teachers and administrators deal with bullying incidents on the spot using their best judgment. When teachers or administrators see or hear about a bullying incident, over half the principals reported that they handle it immediately. In contrast, 20% of the principals reported that teachers ignore or dismiss behavior that might be considered bullying “always” or “often.” However, the most common response was that this rarely happens, while close to 25% indicated that this happens sometimes.
Table 25

*Teachers and Administrators Dealing with Bullying Incidents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Spot</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22.34%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36.17%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.77%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore/Dismiss</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.09%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23.40%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39.36%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school counselor is another resource to work with bullies and victims. Table 26 shows that counselors are more likely to work with victims than with bullies. The first question asked whether counselors work with groups of bullies to affect their behavior. The majority of respondents indicated that this happens sometimes, followed by those who stated that this rarely happens. When asked whether counselors work with groups of victims to help them deal with bullying effectively, a larger majority of respondents indicated that this happens sometimes, followed equally by those who responded that this happens often or rarely.
Table 26

*Counselors Working with Bullies and Victims*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.26%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.57%</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.19%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.64%</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools can use surveys of students, teachers, and parents to gather information about bullying that would help in planning strategies to address it. However, as shown in Table 27, the vast majority of principals replied that surveys were conducted rarely or never.

Table 27

*Surveys of Stakeholders*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Surveyed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.19%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Surveyed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Surveyed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.19%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

The majority of respondents indicated that a written bullying policy was in place and that most policies included definitions of bullying along with how to report it. Of all locations for disseminating policy, the district bullying policy was most commonly included in the student handbook. Most schools use the student handbook to inform students in writing of the bullying policy, and written information is often supplemented by classroom presentations or assemblies. Bullying incidents were most likely to be reported in the annual campus disciplinary report. When aware of a bullying incident, teachers and administrators are most likely to deal with it on the spot; however, a significant minority, about 20% of principals feel that teachers often or frequently ignore or dismiss the problem.

Preventing Bullying and Harassment

Research Question 3: What prevention programs do campuses have in place with regard to bullying and peer-to-peer sexual harassment?

Prevention programs included training for implementing anti-bullying policies provided across the district, and formal commercial anti-bullying programs that could be used in the school. As shown in Table 28, nearly 58% of respondents reported that their district provides training in implementing its bullying policy and regulations, while 42% of respondents indicated that their district does not provide such training.
Table 28

*District-Provided Training for Implementing its Bullying Policy*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>57.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42.31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29 shows the primary recipients of training for implementing bullying policies in those districts that provide it. Respondents were able to identify more than one target population. Training is most commonly provided for teachers, administrators, and related services professionals such as counselors, nurses, and school resource officers. Nineteen percent of principals reported that support staff are the primary recipients of training, and only 7% reported that training is directed toward central office personnel.

Table 29

*The Primary Recipients of Training*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Services Professionals</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Administrators</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Staff</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Office Personnel</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.07%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 30 summarizes responses with regard to strategies identified in the literature as components of effective anti-bullying programs. The most common strategy in place on two-thirds of the campuses was a discipline plan that clearly identifies unacceptable bullying behavior with consequences for this behavior. Next, approximately 57% of respondents indicated that a supervision plan to increase adult supervision of specific areas where bullying can occur was present, while an additional 57% indicated that students received instruction in how to respond to the bullying. Next most commonly, 42% of respondents suggested that mediation techniques were used to address bullying problems, while 37% indicated that data was maintained on verified acts of bullying on campus. Following this, 35% of respondents reported teachers included activities to reduce bullying in their classrooms. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents reported that a formal anti-bullying curriculum, as well as teachers and administrators learning how to distinguish bullying from sexual, gender, racial, and other illegal harassment and hazing were in place. Following this, 27% indicated that data of verified incidents of bullying on campus to identify trends were in place. Next, 16% of respondents indicated that a committee including teachers and parents to coordinate anti-bullying activities in the school was present on their campuses. Finally, less than 10% of respondents indicated that student involvement in developing school policies regarding bullying and specific activities that challenge homophobia and the use of “gay/lesbian” as an insult was a strategy in place on their campuses.
Table 30

*Strategies in Place on Campus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discipline Plan</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56.57%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision Plan</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56.57%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation Techniques</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42.42%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining Data on Bullying</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37.37%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities to Reduce Bullying</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.35%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Bullying Curriculum</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29.29%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to Distinguish Bullying</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29.29%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data on Bullying Reviewed</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Bullying Committee</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16.16%</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>83.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Involvement in Policy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities to Challenge Homophobia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.05%</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were to identify any of six formal anti-bullying programs in place at their school. They also could select “other” and had the opportunity to identify other bullying prevention programs. As shown in Table 31, less than 10% of the respondents reported having a formal anti-bullying program in their schools.
Table 31

*Formal Anti-bullying Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Steps to Respect Program</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATHS</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIPP</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Olweus BPP</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bully Proffing Your School</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel’s Challenge</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

District-provided training was only identified by a slight majority of respondents, with classroom teachers being the most common primary recipients followed by campus administrators. Varied strategies to address bullying are in place, with more than half the principals reporting their schools had a discipline plan and a plan for supervising areas where bullying commonly occurs, and that teachers addressed bullying in the curriculum. Although the schools employed a range of strategies to reduce bullying, formal bullying prevention programs were rarely adopted.

**Challenges**

Table 32 focuses on principals’ reports of challenges in implementing the provisions of their state, district, or campus anti-bullying policies. Two specific challenges, time to conduct investigations and getting the parents or guardians to file
written reports of suspected bullying, tied as the most frequently cited (42%). Next, 27% of the principals identified limited intervention strategies as a challenge in implementing anti-bullying policies, while 24% stated that getting the school staff to notify administration in a timely manner of bullying reports posed a challenge. Next, 20% of respondents indicated that inadequate training of teachers and staff with regard to bullying posed a challenge, while 12% stated that a thorough understanding of the legislation or policy posed a challenge. Finally, only 6% of respondents indicated that they faced no challenges in implementing anti-bullying policies.

Table 32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents to File Reports</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to Conduct Investigations</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Intervention Strategies</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff to Notify Administration</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate Training of Teachers/Staff</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Policies</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Challenges</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the analyses conducted to answer the three research questions. Over 60% of principals felt that the level of physical safety in their
schools was good or very good. Most principals thought that the amount of bullying reported at their schools was about the same as at other schools (83%) and the seriousness of bullying incidents at the school was about the same as other campuses (91%).

Principals reported direct experience with all types of bullying included on the questionnaire. In the school year of this study, the mean number of verified acts of bullying at their schools was 14.80, with a standard deviation of 12.18. Given the number of students in middle school (two-thirds of schools enrolled more than 400 students), this appears relatively small. Possibly the tendency of teachers and administrators to deal with bullying “on the spot” precludes the reporting and verifying of bullying incidents. Despite this relatively low number of verified incidents, slightly over 50% of principals reported that parents contacted them with their concerns about their children experiencing bullying at school sometimes, with 33% of principals stating that this happens often and 4% frequently. Parents contact the school about cyberbullying less often than about in-school bullying; however, nearly half of principals stated that parents report cyberbullying sometimes, while close to 20% chose often with only 2% reporting frequently. The least commonly reported types of bullying were bullying of students considered gay and bullying of students with disabilities. As these students are likely to be a small minority of the school population, it is not surprising that principals do not see as many incidents as with the total student body.

A district written bullying policy was in place for 80% of the schools, and with slightly over 75% including a definition of bullying and close to 70% including information on how to report bullying. The student handbook was most commonly used
to distribute information about the district bullying policy and the process used to report bullying. Furthermore, nearly 70% of the principals reported that bullying incidents were included in the annual campus disciplinary report.

A variety of prevention strategies were examined. A small majority of principals reported that districts provided formal training to teachers, administrators, or other professionals with classroom teachers being the most common primary recipients of training. Principals reported using a variety of strategies to prevent bullying. Finally, the use of a discipline plan was the most identified best practice strategy in use on respondents’ campuses. Smaller numbers of principals identified using a variety of other strategies. Surveys were rarely reported. About one-third of principals reported maintaining data about bullying, but only 27% reported using it. Less than 10% reported having adopted a formal anti-bullying program.

Principals identified a number of challenges affecting their ability to address bullying. Over 40% found that time to conduct investigations and getting parents to file written reports about bullying were challenges. Almost one-fourth were challenged by getting teachers to file written reports. Interestingly, 27% of principals felt challenged by a lack of strategies.

Chapter 5 provides in-depth discussion of the data and links the results of this study to other research on school bullying policies and practices. The chapter provides recommendations for research and practice.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This study examined how Texas middle schools are addressing bullying at school and cyberbullying. Bullying at school has become a national concern (Mah, 2009; Malecki, 2003; Marini, Dane, & Volk, 2010). The daily news regularly reports serious bullying of young people by their peers that has led to serious problems, including suicide (Kohut, 2007). A 2009 study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 19.9% of students surveyed nationally, and 18.7% in Texas had been bullied at school in the previous year (Childress, 2011). The amount of school bullying tends to peak in middle school (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, Scheidt, 2001).

State legislatures have responded by passing anti-bullying legislation. Forty-seven states now have an anti-bullying law or policy with only Michigan, Montana, and South Dakota reporting no anti-bullying legislation (Bully Police, Sept. 2011). Prior to 82nd Legislative session, Texas’ anti-bullying law was given a C- by the national, non-profit organization, Bully Police (Mellon, 2010). Texas has been up-graded to an A++ as a result of amendments made to the existing law including parental notification, counseling for bullies and victims, sexting and cyberbullying (Bully Police, Sept. 2011).

Federal courts have identified school district responsibilities to address student safety including sexual harassment—now defined as a type of bullying (Gruber & Fineran, 2007). In February 1992, a landmark decision handed down by the Supreme Court in the Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools case focused attention on the issue of sexual harassment in K-12 schools. For the first time in the 20-year history of
Title IX, “the federal law that guarantees an educational environment free from sex discrimination and by implication and interpretation, sexual harassment, schools could be held liable for compensatory damages” (Stein, 1999, p. 1). Earlier cases addressed the mandate for schools to provide a safe environment for students (Ingraham v. Wright, 1977); however, Franklin v. Gwinnett was the first case to hold a school district liable and award monetary damages (Wishnietsky, 1991). Until the Franklin decision, the only anticipated sanctions for violation of Title IX were an injunction to stop harassment or the withholding of federal funds (Southwest Educational Research Association, 2008). The courts have played a major role, in that state law remains very protective of public school officials working within the scope of their employment, therefore, more litigation is based on federal law (Walsh, 2008).

In the student-to-student sexual harassment case, Davis v. Monroe County (GA) Board of Education, 1996, the U. S. district court, Eleventh Circuit, ruled that the school district was not liable for a fifth-grade student’s alleged harassment of another student. Judge Wilbur Owens, Jr. of Macon, Georgia dismissed the case stating that the school did not have a custodial relationship with its students and therefore, did not have a special duty to protect them from other students (Walsh, 1999). However, in what had become a pattern of contradiction in the judicial system with regard to sexual harassment cases, on May 24, 1999, a 5-4 decision of the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that schools are indeed liable for student-to-student sexual harassment, if the schools were aware of the harassment and had not stopped it. A critical component of this decision was emphasized by Judge Sandra Day O’Connor, writing for the majority in Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education (119 S. Ct. 1661). Judge O’Connor
indicated that school districts would be liable under Title IX “only if they were ‘deliberately indifferent’ to information about ‘severe, pervasive, and objectively’ offensive harassment among students” (Walsh, 1999).

Dayton and Dupre (2009) reviewed bullying litigation in the United States and concluded that the present constitutes a piecemeal attempt to legislate “zero tolerance policies” against bullying. According to Dayton and Dupre (2009), legislative improvements in anti-bullying policies can help bring more attention, resources, and authority to the serious problem of bullying. A remedy for bullying needs to include having well prepared educators who can work with children to address the main causes and effects of bullying. Additionally, they suggested that there is need to pass more comprehensive law and policy remedies that can help promote broad institutional and cultural changes that are needed to offer better protection for school children.

While school bullying has drawn both national and state level attention and has been addressed in the courts and legislatures, relatively few schools seem to have implemented effective efforts to stop the bullying, even after parents of bullied children have stepped forward to try to find a way to stop the harassment (Holloway, 2010). However, there has been little research about how bullying is perceived at the campus level and what steps schools are taking to address it.

The purpose of this study was to add to the literature regarding school policies, procedures, and prevention programs that address bullying and peer-to-peer harassment. A request to respond to a 40 item questionnaire was sent to principals of middle schools in Texas during May and June, 2011. The electronic survey was completed by 99 administrators for a response rate of 10%. The questionnaire included
items about the principals’ perception of bullying on their campuses as well as items about specific policies and practices at their schools. In addition, the study sought to determine if the district and campus policies and prevention programs reflect best practices as delineated in the literature.

Discussion

Principals’ Perception of School Safety

The majority of middle school principals felt that their school was either acceptable or good in being physically safe and providing a healthy learning environment for all students and adults. Nearly 44% rated their school's physical safety as good and 36% rated it as acceptable. The profile for emotional/social safety was reversed with slightly over 60% giving an acceptable rating and 19% rating their school as good. One explanation of the difference of principal's perception of the physical safety as opposed to the emotional safety at school would be that overt physical bullying is much easier to detect and prevent than social bullying such as ostracizing, rumors, or various forms of cyberbullying.

Middle school principals reported a surprisingly low mean number of verified acts of bullying (14.80; standard deviation 12.18) for the school year 2009-2010 given the size of their schools. The mean enrollment was 639.970 students, with a standard deviation of 349.154. This contradicts information drawn from student surveys. According to Harris and Hathorn (2006), most bullying research data came from student self-reports, and it showed that as many as 75% of the students reported that bullying occurred on their campuses at least sometimes, whereas between 8% and 15% of the
students indicated that it happened often. This suggests that most bullying incidents at school either are not reported or not verified. Interestingly, in 2007 a national online random sample survey of public school principals in K-12 schools indicated that only one-third (34%) of the principals believed that a majority of bullying and harassment incidents which occur at their school come to their attention (Markow & Dancewicz, 2007).

In a survey of 59 middle school principals in an urban area of South Texas principals considered their schools very safe and state they were very supportive of efforts to reduce bullying (Harris & Hathorn, 2006). Principals in the South Texas study reported a different level of awareness of bullying on their campus than did student self-reports. Harris and Hathorn reported this as “an important finding because it suggests the need for campus leaders to be more aware of specific bullying behaviors” (Harris & Hathorn, 2006, p. 66). The data in this study supports the previous study’s findings with a majority of principals reporting that their school was either acceptable or good in providing a safe learning environment.

When asked to compare the amount and seriousness of bullying incidents on their campuses to other schools, the majority of respondents (91%) felt that the amount and seriousness of bullying experienced in their schools was approximately the same as in other schools. Ten percent of principals felt the amount and seriousness of bullying at their schools was less serious than in other middle schools, while 10% thought it was more serious.

In summary, the middle school principals in this study recognized that bullying exists at their schools, and that the level of social-emotional safety is not as good as the
level of physical safety. However, in both cases, 80% see the safety level as good or acceptable. More than 15% thought the safety level was very good in both categories with less than 5% assigning it a poor rating. None of the principals rated either physical or emotional safety as very poor. This finding confirms what the literature shows in that principals do not see bullying as a major problem. This could be explained by the fact that principals may not be aware of the magnitude of the problem. Feinberg reports that one of the greatest challenges in schools lies with principals actually recognizing bullying in their schools. Administrators and teachers “tend to underestimate the extent and effect of bullying and, as a result, fail to prevent or stop it” (Feinberg, 2003, ¶ 4).

Principals’ Experience with Bullying

Research Question 1: What direct experience have middle school principals had with bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?

The Texas middle school principals responding to the survey reported considerable direct experience with all bullying categories in their schools. Both parents and students report bullying incidents to them as do teachers, though not as often. Student reports tracked fairly closely with those of their parents. The principals indicated that students reported bullying at a higher percentage with approximately 62% sometimes and almost 31% often. Parents reported slightly less than students with 51% contacting the principal sometimes and almost 33% often. The data for teachers reporting bullying was interesting. Nearly 65% of the principals reported that this happens sometimes, 14% indicated often and 2% chose frequently. Close to 20% of the principals believed that teachers rarely raise concerns about bullying at school.
A large majority of middle school principals reported being contacted by parents regarding in-school bullying incidents. Parents contacted the principal less often to report cyberbullying concerns. Nearly half of the principals stated that parents reported cyberbullying concerns sometimes, while close to 20% chose often.

The majority of the principals felt that their preparation to deal with in-school bullying and cyberbullying was acceptable. While only four respondents in total felt that their preparation for in-school bullying was poor or very poor, nearly 16% felt that their preparation for cyberbullying was poor or very poor. At the opposite extreme, over 16% stated their preparation to deal with cyberbullying was very good.

Principals were asked the extent to which girls were bullied by other girls. The majority of the administrators stated that this happens sometimes but close to 20% thought it was rare. When principals were asked their perceptions of the frequency at which girls experience sexual harassment by boys, slightly over 53% thought that sexual harassment rarely occurs with over 40% indicating that it sometimes occurs. Principals perceived bullying among girls to be much more prevalent than sexual harassment of middle school girls by boys.

The perception of sexual harassment is not consistent with other national data. Sexual harassment of female students has been documented in two nation-wide surveys published by the American Association of University (AAUW, 1993; AAUW, 2001) as being widespread and having damaging consequences for its victims. The AAUW surveys point out that sexual harassment can be a very public event, yet the results also show that “school personnel many times treat sexual harassment among
students as if it were a hidden, secret occurrence” (Stein, 1999, p. 11). Another important finding from the AAUW surveys was that it is not confined to one particular target population which contradicts a common belief that only girls can be victims (Stein, 1999).

Middle school principals reported less bullying among ethnic groups than among boys and girls. However, bullying between ethnic groups was reported more often than sexual harassment. The majority of principals indicated that ethnic bullying happens sometimes, with an additional 22% indicating that this happens rarely. Nearly 15% stated that this never happens. Nansel et al. (2001) stated that Hispanic students reported slightly higher involvement in moderate and frequent bullying of others, whereas black students reported slightly less involvement overall.

A majority of middle school principals reported that students are rarely bullied because of appearance, but slightly over 25% stated that it occurs sometimes. However, the literature disagrees. Research conducted by Bradshaw, Debnam, Martin and Gill (2006) with over 25,000 students in grades 6-12 showed that the most common reason students reported for being bullied was “the way they look or talk.” In a much smaller study done in the Mid-west, but with the relatively same age group, ages 12-18, Hoover, Oliver and Hazler (1992) identified characteristics perceived to motivate bullying. Two of the top five reasons boys gave for being bullied were physically weak and the clothes they wore. The same was true for girls with two of the top five reasons given for being bullied pertained to appearance: overweight and facial appearance. It appears that principals in this study did not perceive appearance as a significant factor in bullying as do students.
District Policies and Practices

Research Question 2: What district and campus policies and practices are in place to address bullying and peer-to-peer harassment? The majority of principals (80%) thought that their district did have a written bullying policy. When asked about various components of the districts’ campus bullying policy, the respondents were less certain; although a majority agreed that the policy contained all of the following: definition of bullying, information for students to report bullying and information for faculty and staff to report bullying.

School Practices to Address Bullying

A district written policy was in place for 80% of the schools with slightly over 75% including a definition of bullying and approximately 70% including information on how to report bullying. Staff was notified of bullying policy through staff handbooks. Board policy manuals were used 65% of the time to notify both staff and parents. Interestingly, the district website was only used 38% of the time.

Principals were specifically asked if students were notified as to how they could make anonymous reports of bullying. A majority (55%) of principals responded that students were notified of this process through student handbooks. Between 40% and 50% of respondents indicated that an assembly or classroom presentation is used in order to notify students. Perhaps the most disturbing response was that 10% of the principals indicated students were not notified how to report incidents anonymously.

In Olweus’ seminal work, he notes that students often do not report that they have been bullied (Olweus, 1993). There are a number of studies that report that if
students perceive the school climate to be tolerant of bullying or students who describe their parents as using forms of harsh discipline are less likely to report being bullied (Unnever & Cornell, 2004). It was out of the scope of this study, but it would be informative to know if students in Texas middle schools do know how to report bullying, but have chosen not to do so.

When aware of a bullying incident, teachers and administrators are most likely to deal with it on the spot; however, a significant minority, about 20% of principals feel that teachers often or frequently ignore or dismiss the problem. This is an important finding in that when teachers (or students) participate in or witness bullying incidents and do nothing, they enable the school to become a culture and climate of bullying (Unnever & Cornell, 2004). Harris and Petrie (2003) stressed, “Schools characterized as safe invariably are led by principals who foster an atmosphere based on principles of belonging and caring among students, faculty, and parents” (p. 22).

Preventing Bullying and Harassment

Research Question 3: *What prevention programs do campuses have in place with regard to bullying and peer-to-peer harassment?* Prevention programs included training for implementing anti-bullying policies provided across the district, and formal commercial anti-bullying programs that could be adopted district wide. A variety of prevention strategies were examined. A majority (almost 58%) of principals reported that their district provides training to various staff positions in implementing its bullying policy and regulations, while 42% of respondents indicated that their district does not provide such training. Classroom teachers were the most likely group to receive training
with approximately 40% of principals reporting bullying training provided to teachers. Only slightly more than 35% of the campus administrators had received training to deal with bullying and 19% reported the support staff in their school received training.

Principals reported using a variety of strategies to prevent bullying. The use of a discipline plan was the most identified best practice strategy in place on campuses. Other strategies were used sporadically while principals (approximately 80%) reported rarely surveying stakeholder groups of students, teachers, and parents. About one-third of principals reported maintaining data about bullying, but only 27% reported using it.

Principals identified a number of challenges affecting their ability to address bullying. Over 40% found that both having time to conduct investigations and getting parents to file written reports about bullying were challenges. Almost one-fourth were challenged by getting teachers to file written reports. Twenty-seven percent of the principals indicated that they felt challenged by lack of strategies to deal with bullying.

District-provided training was only identified by a slight majority of respondents, with classroom teachers being the most common primary recipients followed by campus administrators. Varied strategies to address bullying are in place, with more than half the principals reporting their schools had a discipline plan and a plan for supervising areas where bullying commonly occurs, and that teachers addressed bullying in the curriculum. Although the schools employed a range of strategies to reduce bullying, less than 10% of the principals reported adopting a formal anti-bullying program in their schools.
Implications for Practice

Bullying will never be totally eradicated in schools; whole-school prevention programs will never be a panacea. Bullying is a complex issue and will take a multi-pronged approach to contain it and most importantly, to create positive school climates that do not cultivate the behavior. Best practices for dealing with bullying found in the review of the literature indicate that schools must develop individualized plans for their campuses including all stakeholders in the process. The campus plan should be all inclusive and optimizing all resources available such as parents, professional staff as well as support staff, administrators and most importantly, student input. Failure to develop an organized system for dealing with bullying, with no or few identified goals and objectives, will not be effective in changing the climate and environment of the school. By including all stakeholders in the stages of development and implementation, ownership and commitment to the bullying prevention plan will be broad-based and more likely to ensure success.

This study did not reveal all the dynamics that result in students being bullied. However, it did point out several areas that are not being addressed and that the literature has established as best practices. The first and foremost is the lack of student surveys regarding bullying with specific questions that can assess the school environment. Simple questions could be asked, such as “have you been bullied or have you seen someone bullied at school this year?” Where did the incident occur? Were there witnesses? Were teachers or administrators nearby? Did you know what to do and how to report it? This is just an example of a student questionnaire that could provide invaluable information. In addition, surveys should be administered on a regular
basis. As Dewey Cornell, director of the Virginia Youth Violence Project, noted schools should update climate surveys every year to take a snapshot of the extent of the problem on their own campuses. “It’s like crabgrass in your lawn. It comes back, and each year there’s a new group of students, so it really requires continuous monitoring” (Viadero, 2010, ¶ 27).

Another area that can be identified from the study supported in the literature is that principals may not be aware of the magnitude of bullying that occurs at their school, to and from school, or in cyberspace. Consequently, principals may perceive that they have few incidents and that they are acceptably trained to address it. This could be helped by good data collection in the schools. In the study principals did report that they did hear from some parents that their children were being bullied at school, but the literature reflects that many students do not report bullying to either the school or their parents. Feinberg notes that “Even if you aren’t receiving complaints, bullying is occurring in your school. Address it before something worse happens” (Feinberg, 2003, ¶ 1). The “something worse” has happened in several Texas schools in the past year and across the nation.

The newly enhanced anti-bullying law passed in spring 2011 by the 82nd Texas Legislative Session, H.R. 1942, gives reason for hope. This new legislation requires local school districts to adopt and implement a bullying policy that recognizes minimum guidelines such as prohibition of bullying, providing counseling options, and establishes procedures for reporting, investigating and responding to an incidence of bullying. The law establishes a new, enhanced definition of bullying that includes bullying through electronic means (cyberbullying) (Equality Texas Action Center, 2011).
New requirement in the Texas Education Code specify that staff development training in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying be provided to all district staff, students, parents, and volunteers who have contact with students (Childress, 2011). This could significantly improve the need principals expressed for additional strategies to deal with bullying. Another important component of the law requires districts to include information concerning the number, rate, and type of incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and sexual harassment in the board’s annual report describing the district’s performance (Childress, 2011). The more stringent reporting requirements should provide principals with a more accurate assessment of the safety of the school and lead to a more aggressive approach to the prevention of bullying rather than dealing with incidents after they occur.

This study indicates that districts and schools do follow state requirements such as providing a written anti-bullying policy and distributing the information in district, staff, and student handbooks. The passage of H. R. 1942 will serve to strengthen the enforcement of anti-bullying policies and bring increased awareness to the school and the community. However, there should be concern for the implementation of the new law. School funding in Texas was significantly reduced in the 82nd Legislative Session. A challenge principals noted in the study was the lack of time to investigate reports of bullying. Faced with reduced resources, especially in the area of staffing, principals may once again deal with the problem of an unfunded mandate and the results of the legislation will not have the optimal impact that lawmakers intended.

Finally, every child has the right to a safe learning environment void of threats, intimidation, humiliation, and physical harm. To achieve this goal on Texas middle
school campuses, principals must take the lead. Students and teachers look to them for leadership and above all, support. It will take more than posting anti-bullying posters in the hall. It will take hard work driven by a passion to do the right thing.

Recommendations for Future Study

The following suggestions for further research on bullying prevention should be considered:

1. Design a study that would assess bullying by asking students to report what bullying incidents they have witnessed or experienced and asking administrators and teachers about incidents they have observed or dealt with. This would provide good evidence of the extent to which student and school officials see the problem in the same way.

2. Design a study to measure the impact of campus-designed bullying prevention plans on school climate.

3. Conduct a study to measure the impact of a campus-designed bullying prevention plan on the number of office referrals for discipline.

4. Conduct a longitudinal study in the middle school grades, sixth through eighth, on the impact of a campus-designed bullying prevention on the number of incidents reported on bullying.

These suggestions, although not exhaustive, indicate the need for more specific study of bullying prevention so that principals and other stakeholders can be guided in building more positive school climates where all students feel safe and free to learn.
APPENDIX

TEXAS MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICIES
AND PROCEDURES SURVEY INSTRUMENT
This is an online survey in which the respondents received the link in an email. The Informed Consent page is the first page the respondent will see when the link is opened.

Informed Consent:
You are being asked to participate in a research study designed to add to the literature about school policies and procedures that address bullying and cyberbullying in schools. The research uses an online survey to collect information about campus policies and procedures and your experiences with bullying at your school.

You will be asked to complete a survey about practices at your school that will take approximately 15 minutes. No foreseeable risks to you are involved in this study. This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you. However, it may benefit district and campus administrators and state policy makers addressing bullying in Texas schools. The online process protects your confidentiality so that the researcher does not receive your email address or any information that can be traced to your school specifically with the completed questionnaire. The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study, as data will be presented in aggregate form only. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may exit the survey at any time. By completing the survey, you are indicating your understanding of the purpose and procedures of this survey. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Judith Adkison, Associate Dean, College of Education, University of North Texas, at telephone number (940) 565-2249. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review
Section I: Select one response:

Demographic Information

1. What is your position?
   a. Principal
   b. Assistant Principal
   c. Other

2. How long have you served in an administrative position?
   a. 1-5 years
   b. 6-10 years
   c. Over 10 years

3. What grade level(s) does your school include? Check all that apply.
   a. Fifth
   b. Sixth
   c. Seventh
   d. Eighth
   e. Ninth

4. Approximately how many students are currently enrolled in your school?
   _______
5. Is your school a Title I school?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Section II: Information about district and campus bullying/peer-to-peer harassment policies and implementation of policies.

6. Does your district have a written bullying policy?
   a. Yes
   b. No (If no, go directly to Section III)

7. What does the district’s campus bullying policy include? Select all that apply.
   a. Definition of bullying
   b. Information for students to report concerns about bullying
   c. Information for faculty/staff to report concerns about bullying

8. Are bullying incidents reported in the yearly campus disciplinary report to the district?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. Does your district provide training for implementing its bullying policy and regulations?
   a. Yes
   b. No
10. If “yes” to the previous question, who are the primary recipients of the training? Check all that apply.
   a. Central office personnel
   b. Campus administrators
   c. Classroom teachers
   d. Related services professionals (i.e. counselors)
   e. Non-professional support staff (i.e. teacher aides, cafeteria workers, bus drivers)

11. Where are copies of your district’s bullying policy located? Check all that apply.
   a. School Board Policy manual (hardcopy or online)
   b. Staff/faculty handbook
   c. Student handbook
   d. Parent handbook
   e. Posted in hallways, cafeteria, classrooms and other public areas of the school
   f. District’s website
   g. Other

12. How are students notified about the process by which they may make anonymous reports of acts of bullying? Check all that apply.
   a. Student handbook
b. Student handout

c. Assembly

d. Classroom presentation

e. Not informed (no anonymous reporting process exists)

13. What challenges do you face implementing the provisions of your state, district or campus anti-bullying policies? Check all that apply.

a. Time to conduct investigations

b. Limited intervention strategies

c. Thorough understanding of the legislation or policy

d. Getting parents or guardians of students to file written reports of the suspected bullying

e. Getting the school staff to notify administration in a timely manner of bullying reports

f. Inadequate training of teachers and staff with regard to bullying

g. No challenges

14. Check all strategies that apply:

a. There is a supervision plan to increase adult supervision of specific areas where bullying can occur

b. A discipline plan that clearly identifies unacceptable bullying behavior with consequences for this behavior is in place
c. A committee that includes teachers and parents is in place to coordinate anti-bullying activities in the school
d. A formal anti-bullying curriculum is in place at the school
e. Students receive instruction in how to respond to the bullying of others
f. Teachers include activities designed to reduce bullying in their classrooms
g. Mediation techniques are used to address bullying problems at the school
h. Students are involved in developing the school policies regarding bullying
i. Specific activities that challenge homophobia and the use of “gay/lesbian” as an insult are in place
j. Teachers and administrators learn how to distinguish bullying from sexual, gender, racial and other illegal harassment and hazing
k. The school maintains data on verified acts of bullying on campus
l. Data about verified incidents of bullying on campus is reviewed to identify trends

Section III: Please rate on a scale of 1-5 with 1 indicating “never or almost never” and 5 indicating “frequently”

15. Parents contact me with concerns about bullying of their child

16. Children report bullying to an adult at school

17. Teachers raise concerns about bullying at school

18. Parents report concerns that their child is subjected to cyberbullying

   (students teased, insulted, threatened, or subjected to malicious statements via the Internet, cell phones, or texting) by other students

19. Some students are bullied because they are considered “gay”

20. Students with disabilities are bullied

21. Girls experience sexual harassment from one or more boys

22. Girls are bullied by other girls

23. Bullying occurs between members of different ethnic groups

24. Boys are bullied by other boys
25. Students are bullied because of their physical appearance

26. Individual teachers and administrators deal with bullying incidents on the spot using their best judgment

27. Teachers ignore or dismiss behavior that might be considered bullying

28. Counselors work with groups of bullies to affect their behavior

29. Counselors work with groups of bully targets (victims) to help them deal with bullying effectively

30. Students are surveyed about their experiences with bullying in this school.

31. Teachers are surveyed about bullying in this school.

32. Parents are surveyed about bullying in this school.

Section IV: Information about reports of bullying and data collection

Select the correct response (Note: there will be buttons for respondents to select only one response per question).

33. Approximately how many verified acts of bullying were recorded on your school campus for the 2009-2010 school-year? ____________

34. How would you rate the amount of bullying at your school compared to other middle schools?
   - It is less of a problem ___ About the same as at other schools ____
   - More of a problem____

35. How would you rate the seriousness of bullying at your school compared to other middle schools?
   - It is less of a problem ___ About the same as at other schools ____
Section V: Rate the question from 1 to 5.
1= Very Poor, 2= Poor, 3= Acceptable, 4= Good, 5= Very Good

36. How would you rate your level of preparation to deal with “in-school” bullying?
37. How would you rate your level of preparation to respond to cyberbullying?
38. How would you rate your school in terms of being physically safe and
   providing a healthy learning environment for ALL students and adults?
39. How would you rate your school in terms of being emotionally/socially safe
   and providing a healthy learning environment for ALL students and adults?

Section VI: Prevention Programs

40. Has your school adopted any formal anti-bullying programs? Please check all
   that apply.

   a. The Steps to Respect Program
   b. Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RIPP)
   c. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
   d. Bully Proofing Your School
   e. Rachel’s Challenge
   f. Providing Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)
   g. Other:___________________

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY
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