

**AN ANALYSIS OF VIRGINIA PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF
BULLYING: DEFINITION, PREVALENCE, AND TRAINING NEEDS**

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An Analysis of Virginia Public School Principals' Perceptions of Bullying:
Definition, Prevalence, and Training Needs

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(ABSTRACT)

The perceptions of bullying and the amount of training related to bullying issues experienced by principals was the topic of this study. Elementary principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia were surveyed on their understanding of bullying, the amount of training they received, and what additional staff development needs they perceived would help them to effectively deal with the problem of bullying in their schools. The study found that principals varied in their understanding of the definition of bullying and needed more information and training in order to effectively deal with this problem. The study makes recommendations for how school districts can increase principals' understanding of bullying and what training needs to be implemented to help principals effectively deal with this problem.

DEDICATION

I thank God for ordering my steps throughout this doctoral program. I could not have made it without him. As I cannot remember all the people who crossed my path in the process of accomplishing this huge undertaking, let me once again thank God for all the people whom he sent my way, I am so grateful.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Background of the Problem.....	2
Rationale for the Study.....	3
Research Questions	4
Theoretical Framework	5
Overview of Methodology	7
Assumptions and Limitations	7
Definitions	8
Significance of the Study	10
Overview	10
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	12
Historical Context	12
Key Vocabulary	15
Domains of Interest.....	15
Prevalence: When, Where and How	15
Principal Preparation.....	18
Actions Taken.....	21
Research and Synthesis	26
Summary.....	29
Overview	30

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	31
Introduction	31
Research Method	32
Sample	32
Instrumentation	32
Construction of the Instrument	32
Data Collection	33
Methods of Analysis	34
Assumptions and Limitations	34
Summary.....	35
CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS	36
Research Methods.....	37
Results of Survey	39
Definitions of Bullying	39
Administrative Training Topics.....	40
Staff Engagement in the Prevention of Bullying	42
Groups Affected by Bullying	43
Behaviors Associated with Bullying.....	46
Prevalence of Bullying.....	48
Bullying Behaviors.	48
Bullying Behaviors by Location.....	49
Bullying Behaviors by Types	51
Additional Training Topics	52
Characteristics of Respondents.....	53
Principals’ Hours of Training.....	53

Principal’s Years of Service in Current Building	54
Principals’ Total Years of Service	55
Total Student Membership	56
Summary of Survey Responses	57
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	59
Summary of the Purpose and Methodology	59
Principals’ Definitions of Bullying	59
Training	60
Training Topics – Previous Training and the Importance of Training	60
Administrative	60
Staff Training in the Prevention of Bullying	61
Groups Affected by Bullying	62
Behaviors Associated with Bullying.....	62
Conclusions	62
Findings	63
Definitions	63
Principal’s Training	63
Prevalence of Bullying	63
Location of Bullying	64
Amount of Training Received	64
Recommendations for Further Research	64
Implications	66
Reflections	67
REFERENCES	69
APPENDIX A Harris Survey	78

APPENDIX B	Permission to Use the Survey	79
APPENDIX C	Leonard Bullying Survey	80
APPENDIX D	Request for Permission to Survey	88
APPENDIX E	Invitation to Complete Survey.....	89
APPENDIX F	Second Invitation to Complete Survey	90
APPENDIX G	IRB Approval.....	91

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Relevant Literature—Authors and Dates	6
Table 2	Definitions of Bullying	39
Table 3	Principals’ Reponses to Administrative Areas of Training: Previous Training and Importance of Training	40
Table 4	Principals’ Reponses to Areas of Staff Training: Previous Training and Importance of Training	42
Table 5	Principals’ Reponses to Groups Affected by Bullying	44
Table 6	Principals’ Reponses to Behaviors Associated with Bullying by Areas of Training: Previous Training and Importance of Training	46
Table 7	Principals’ Reponses to Frequency of Bullying by Grade Levels	48
Table 8	Principals’ Reponses to Frequency of Bullying by Location	50
Table 9	Principals’ Reponses to Frequency of Types of Bullying	51
Table 10	Principals’ Reponses to Additional Training Topics	52
Table 11	Principals’ Clock Hours of Training	53
Table 12	Principals’ Years of Service in Current Building	54
Table 13	Principals’ Total Years of Service	55
Table 14	Total Student Membership	56

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Summary of the Factors Affecting Elementary School Principals' Perceptions of Training Needs, Prevention Programs and the Prevalence of Bullying	6
Figure 2	Principals' Responses to Administrative Training	41
Figure 3	Principals' Responses to Areas of Staff Training	43
Figure 4	Principals' Responses to Groups Affected by Bullying	44
Figure 5	Principals' Responses to Behaviors Associated with Bullying	47
Figure 6	Principals' Responses to Frequency of Bullying by Grade Level	49
Figure 7	Principals' Responses to Frequency of Bullying by Location	50
Figure 8	Principals' Responses to Frequency of Types of Bullying	52
Figure 9	Clock Hours of Principals' Training in Bullying Prevention	54
Figure 10	Total Years of Experience in Current Building	55
Figure 11	Principals' Total Years of Service	56
Figure 12	Student Membership of Respondents' Schools	57

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Anthony, a new fifth grader, quickly became the topic of discussion with school students and staff. He stood out among his peers; he was large, a head taller than the other boys or girls. He was unkempt in outdated, second hand clothing. Children teased Anthony about his size, clothes, and intelligence, despite the fact that Anthony was a bright young man who excelled in math and science.

Students would roar with laughter when one of them teased Anthony. This would provoke a tirade, propelling Anthony to demolish a classroom, to beat up anyone in his path, or to do both. Anthony figured a way to turn the tables and began forcing students to pay him a dollar-a-day for protection. Anthony would fight with students who refused to pay and was the victor each time. Ironically, in the end, Anthony earned the reputation of school bully.

When a classmate refused to pay Anthony for protection, Anthony repeatedly struck the boy in the body and face. The victim was badly bruised, missed seven days of school, and needed to see a psychiatrist. Anthony received a three-day out-of-school suspension.

Anthony's teacher was not prepared to deal with these behaviors, nor was the guidance counselor, assistant principal, or I, the principal. His teacher had no idea what to do, how to intervene, or how to take a stand against the bullying that was rampant in her classroom. She was tired of the victims' complaints and the actions of bullies, and she was tired of the disrupted instruction caused by these behaviors. The teacher ignored cries for help from her students. She may have been afraid of Anthony, herself. The incident is the catalyst for the development of this investigation into elementary principals' perceptions of bullying and the training needed to deal with bullying.

Statement of the Problem

Bullying in the American public school system is a common occurrence. In fact, bullying is a worldwide problem in the school environment (Olweus, 1993). Bullying is more prevalent at the elementary level than in the upper grades, according to Olweus (1993). Being a victim is most common in the second grade, and the likelihood of being bullied decreases each year after

that. Principals must play a key role in preventing and effectively intervening when students are bullied (Juvonen et al., 2003).

Background of the Problem

Bullying consists of direct behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a victim. In addition to direct attacks, Olweus (1993) finds that bullying may be more indirect, such as social isolation by intentional exclusion. According to Rigby and Slee (1997), boys typically engage in direct bullying methods, while girls who bully are more apt to utilize subtle indirect strategies such as spreading rumors and enacting social isolation. Elementary school bullies are more likely to pick on younger children and they often outnumber their victims. Bullying is often physical in nature, with open attacks of aggression being the most common (Rigby & Slee, 1997). Thomsen (2002) and Weinhold (2003) argued that educators around the world are too often unaware of the elements that create an atmosphere for violence.

According to Thomsen (2002):

The lack of knowledge in recognizing violence includes: (a) the lack of understanding of violence, (b) the role of dominance involved in violence, (c) the lack of knowledge of negative behaviors that create violence, (d) the occurrences of bullying behavior, (e) a denial of the effects of bullying behaviors, and (f) the lack of understanding of the effects of parental neglect. When educators treat bullying as normal developmental behavior and ignore bullying incidences as minor problems, it becomes awkward to impose penalties for inappropriate behavior. (p. 47)

Olweus (1993) further indicates that the earlier bullying is identified and addressed, the easier it is to minimize its effects. Addressing the effects of bullying at the elementary level provides a control mechanism to reduce the effects of bullying in the school setting. Teachers play a major role in understanding, recognizing, and minimizing the effects of bullying in the classroom. Educators need to know how to deal with bullies, how to help victims, and how to intervene regarding the bully and the victim. They also need administrative help to keep parents involved in the school programs (Epstein, 2002).

Major emphasis on bullying has been placed upon differences associated with gender (Olweus, 1993). Society is seen as essentially patriarchal. Males are seen as generally having more power than females as a consequence of social beliefs that males should be the dominant

sex (Olweus, 1993). In order to maintain their dominance, boys have felt justified in oppressing girls. Numerous studies have, in fact, indicated that boys are more likely than girls to initiate bullying (Olweus, 1993; Smith & Sharp, 1994). Moreover, it is clear that boys are more likely to bully girls than vice versa. For example, in a large-scale Australian study of some 38,000 children (Rigby, 1997), a much higher proportion of girls claimed to be exclusively bullied by boys (22.1%) than boys reporting being bullied only by girls (3.4%).

Rationale for the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide a synthesis of the research to determine elementary school principals' perceptions of bullying by definition, prevalence and training needs. There is extensive literature about bullying among children. However, a gap exists in the literature regarding school administrator and teacher preparation for handling challenges involving bullying behaviors. Principals play a key role in preventing and intervening with bullying at school, yet they receive little, if any, help or training in effectively dealing with such problems. Principals are reluctant to intervene when they witness bullying. Teachers often have the benefit of understanding the social context of bullying, although they do not necessarily know how to use this knowledge to intervene in situations involving bullying. In school settings, bullying and victimization are often considered personal problems of individual youth rather than problems requiring a collective response (Juvonen et al., 2003).

The principal of the school plays a vital role in the prevention of bullying. The principal's leadership style and level of commitment, coupled with the attitudes and beliefs of teachers and parents, play a significant role in reducing bullying (Rigby 1996; Sturdy, 1999). Harris and Petrie (2003) emphasized, "schools characterized as safe invariably are led by principals who foster an atmosphere based on principles of belonging and caring among students, faculty, and parent" (p.22). They also acknowledged that educators must understand and identify the negative effects of bullying on the overall school climate and communicate the importance of eliminating acts of bullying to the entire school campus. Furthermore, schools that are dedicated to eliminating bullying, develop an understanding that disciplining the bully is not enough to eliminate bullying (Harris & Petrie, 2002). In fact, schools most successful in having a bully-free environment, work with victims and bystanders to develop positive strategies for developing appropriate behaviors.

According to Rembolt (1998), educators further enable bullying through denial, minimization, rationalization, justification, blame, and avoidance. They permit school violence by maintaining attitudes of disparity and incompetence. More often than not, they adopt the attitude that they are not equipped to properly resolve violent situations (Rembolt). Beliefs such as these are not only emotionally and physically damaging, but they also ruin lives and impede learning (Clabaugh, 1998; Rembolt 1998). It is these kinds of beliefs that make it difficult to help children overcome acts of bullying.

Rigby and Slee (1991) reported that a majority of teachers identified bullying as a major problem in their school. In their study, teachers supported the victims and wanted acts of bullying eliminated from their school, but one in three teachers indicated that they possessed limited capacities in stopping bullying. These teachers also indicated that they were intimidated by bullies and believed that it was the administrator's responsibility to confront and punish the bully (Rigby & Slee, 1991).

Harachi, Catalano, and Hawkins (1999) indicated that research on bullying has focused on examining the characteristics of bullying, the direct and indirect forms of bullying, victimization and the characteristics of victims, and the development of chronic victims. They also suggested that research was needed to develop a common definition of bullying and to provide incidence and prevalence data on bullying. Further, Harachi, Catalano, and Hawkins (1999) recommended the need to better understand "the familial, school, and other contextual factors that predict bullying or victimization, as well as those conditions that moderate the effects or reduce the likelihood of bullying occurring" (p. 280). They argued that rather than just studying the broad issues of school violence and school safety, educators should treat bullying as a separate issue in the United States and not combined with the broad issues of school violence and safety (Harachi et al, 1999).

Research Questions

According to Harris and Petrie (2003), it is at the elementary school level that aggressive behaviors of children are first exhibited and addressed by teachers and administrators. Increasingly, however, elementary principals are reporting that aggressive behavior is becoming evident in students beginning in preschool through the fifth grade. Although educators generally

have been more concerned with addressing bullying at the upper grades than at the elementary level, bullying at the elementary school level is a problem that must be addressed.

This research investigated two questions:

1. What are Virginia elementary principals' perception and understanding of bullying?
 - a. What is the most common definition principals use to describe bullying?
 - b. Where and in what grades in their school buildings do principals think bullying occurs?
2. What is the level of training Virginia elementary principals receive and what training do they perceive as important for understanding bullying?
 - a. What training do principals report having in relation to the topic of bullying?
 - b. What areas of training on the topic of bullying do principals perceive as important?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was developed from a review of literature on administrators' perceptions about bullying. The research review was organized into three domains: (a) prevalence of bullying; when bullying occurs, where bullying occurs and how bullying occurs; (b) principal's definition of bullying, and (c) training needs to deal with bullying in Virginia elementary schools. Figure 1 graphically represented the three domains.

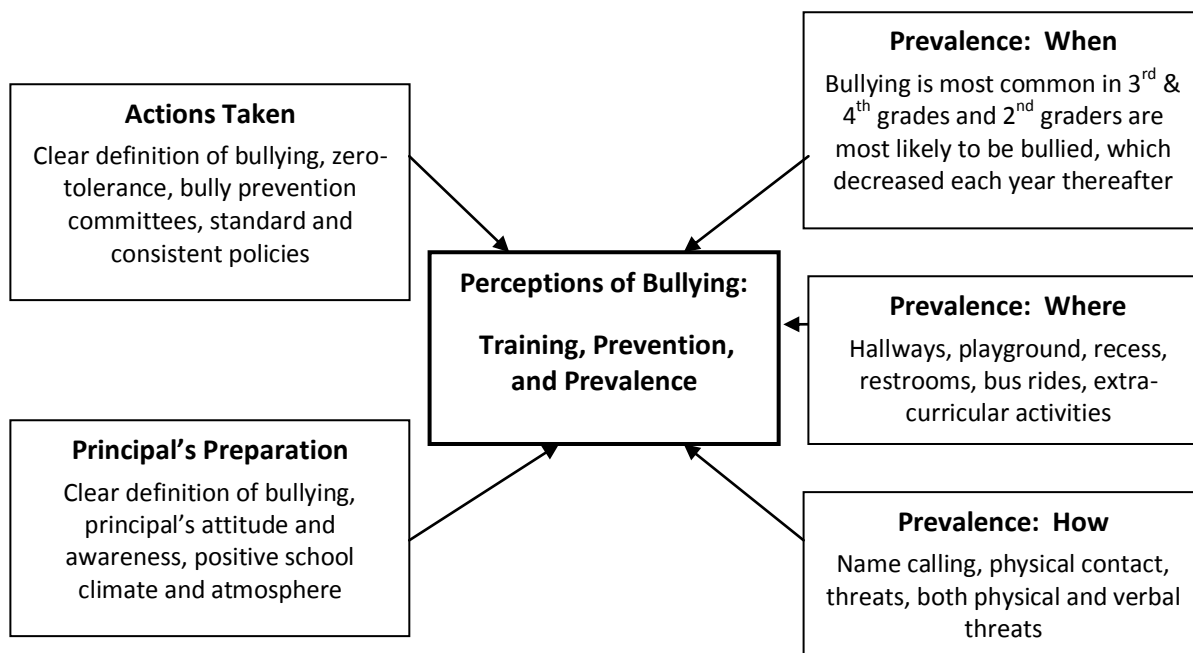


Figure 1. *Summary of Factors Affecting Elementary School Principals' Perceptions of Training Needs, Prevention Programs and the Prevalence of Bullying*

The literature related to factors affecting elementary school principals' perceptions of training needs, prevention programs and the prevalence of bullying is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Relevant Literature—Authors and Dates

Domains	Authors And Dates
Prevalence: When Where How	Eslea & Smith,1999; Bynre, 1999; Berhold & Hoover, 2000; Vettenburg, 1999; Morita et al., 1999; Rigby & Slee, 1999; Olweus, 1999; Harris, Petrie & Willoughby, 2002; Olweus, 1993, 1999; Bjorkqvist & Osterman, 1999; Beane, 1999; Smith, 1999; de Almeida, 1999; Mellor, 1999; Smith,1999; Borg,1999; Rohan, Richardson & Meerlinga,1999; Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Ross, 1996; Willoughby, 2002; Bacchini et al., 1999; Ortega & Morta-Merchan, 1999; Alasker & Brunner, 1999; Vail, 2002; Wiseman, 2002; Olweus, 1996; Wiseman, 2002; Siann et al., 1994
Principal's Preparation	Harris & Hathorn, 2006; Rigby, 1996; Harris & Petrie, 2003; Feinburg, 2003; Hazler, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Olweus, 1993; Olweus & Kallestad, 2003; Harris & Petrie, 2003; Harris & Willoughby, 200; Rigby & Slee, 1991; Jovonen et al., 2003;

Domains	Authors And Dates
Actions Taken	<p data-bbox="427 260 1421 390">Cornell, 2003; Astor et al., 1999; Thomsen, 2002; Will & Neufeld, 2003; Unnever & Cornell, 2003; Gumpel & Meaden, 2000; Wiggins, 2001; Astor et al., 1999; Harris & Petrie, 2003; Roberts & Morotti, 2000</p> <p data-bbox="427 443 1421 1024">Safe Schools, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S.D.O.E., 2007; Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Junger-tas, 1999; Olweus, 1993; Ross, 1996; Hyman & Snook, 2000; Ohsako, 1999; Ross, 1996; Gumpel & Meaden, 2000; Wiggins, 2002; Olweus, 2003; Eslea & Smith, 1998; Byrne, 1999; Olweus, 1999; Harris & Willoughby, 2003; Harris & Willoughby, 2002; Astor et al., 1999; Olweus, 1993; Peterson & Skiba, 2001); Harris & Petrie, 2003; Garrity et al., 1997; Olweus, 1999; Rigby, 1996; Sturdy, 1999; Harris & Petrie, 2002; Bjorkqvist & Osterman, 1999; Unever & Cornell, 2003; Harachi et al., 1999; Smith, 1999; Unever & Cornell, 2003; de Almeida, 1999; Rigby & Slee, 1999; Sullivan, 1999; Mellor,1999; Byrne, 1999; Smith, 1999; Bacchinni et al., 1999; Ohsako, 1999; Hyman & Snook, 2000; Mayer, 2001; Garrity et al., 1997; Byrne, 1999; Willoughby, 2003; Peterson & Skiba, 2001</p>

Overview of Methodology

The study focused on elementary principals' perceptions of bullying. It explores how Virginia elementary school principals have been trained to deal with bullying and the training they believe is important to prepare principals to handle bullying in their buildings. Bully prevention and prevalence by grade level and location was examined. Data was systematically gathered and analyzed to provide support for possible explanations regarding bullying which emerged from the data. The survey consisted of three parts in which elementary school principals were asked: (a) to define bullying; (b) to identify training they received and training they believed relevant regarding bullying; and (c) to identify how and where bullying occurred in their buildings.

Assumptions and Limitations

An assumption is any important "fact" presumed to be true but not actually verified (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The assumptions in this study include the following:

1. All survey responses were completed honestly and returned in a timely manner.

2. Elementary principals' responses were biased due to the fact that they were concerned about the possibility of revealing their schools' bully problems.
3. Elementary principals wanted to address the perceived or real problems with bullying in their schools/classrooms.

Gay and Airasian (2000) defined limitations as “an aspect of a study which the researcher knows may negatively affect the results or generalizability of the results, but over which he or she has no control” (p. 625). This study has the following limitations.

1. This study is limited to elementary school principals' perceptions and knowledge of bullying. Findings were limited since students, counselors, and parents did not have input into the study.
2. This study did not encompass all elementary school principals in the country.
3. This study is limited only to a random sampling of elementary principals in Virginia.
4. This study is limited by the degree to which participants respond openly and honestly.

Definitions

Definitions used in this study clarify the ideas and meanings of the terms used. Throughout this paper, terms are woven that provide insight into the nature of bullying.

1. *Aggression*: behavior that is intended to threaten or inflict physical injury on another person or organism; the act of initiating hostilities or invasion; the practice or habit of launching attacks (Bandura, 1973).
2. *Bullies*: people who exert dominance over or inflict pain upon others through physical, verbal, sexual, and emotional abuse. They appear to derive satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering on others (Olweus, 1993).
3. *Bullying*: aggressive behavior normally characterized by repetition and imbalance of power. It may be considered normative in many group settings, but socially unacceptable within the ethos of a democratic society (Smith and David 2000).
4. *Cyberbullying*: recurring and willful harm inflicted through electronic text media. Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, defamatory

personal web sites, blogs, online games, and defamatory online personal polling web sites. These media support deliberate, repeated, hostile, and harmful behavior by an individual or group (Campbell, 2005, as coined by Canadian Bill Belsey on www.cyberbullying.ca).

5. *Emotional Bullying*: a form of bullying that can be more subtle and can involve isolating or excluding a child from activities (that is, shunning the victim in the lunchroom or on school outings) or spreading rumors. This kind of bullying is especially common among girls (Juvonen et al., 2003).
6. *Exclusion*: the act of excluding something or somebody; the state of being left out, especially from mainstream society and its advantages (Unit & Britain, 2001).
7. *Mobbing*: ganging up to harass and intimidate. Mobbing is typically found in work environments that have poorly organized production, or working methods or both as well as incapable or inattentive management. Mobbing victims are usually “exceptional individuals who demonstrated intelligence [and] competence” (Schuster, 1996)
8. *Psychological Bullying*: a form of bullying that includes dirty looks, stalking, manipulation, intimidation, and extortion (Olweus, 1993).
9. *Physical Bullying*: physical in nature, this can accompany verbal bullying and involves acts such as kicking, hitting, biting, pinching, hair pulling, and threats of physical harm (Janssen et al., 2004).
10. *Social Bullying*: being excluded, ignored, and talked about (Espelage et al., 2000).
11. *Social Withdrawal*: social inhibition, shyness, reticence, and social isolation, which are terms conjuring up images of an individual who spends time alone, not interacting with others. Some of these terms carry connotations of social anxiety, insecurity, fearfulness, wariness, or loneliness. Social withdrawal, inhibition, and shyness are often used interchangeably (Rubin et al., 1989).
12. *School Climate*: feelings that students and staff have about the environment over a period of time (Peterson & Skiba, 2001).
13. *Verbal Bullying*: taunting, expressing physical superiority, making repeated or graphic threats; also making threats to secure silence: “If you tell, I will...” (Atlas & Pepler, 1998).

14. *Non-Verbal Bullying*: threatening gestures, defacing property, pushing, shoving, or taking small items from others. Verbal bullying usually involves name-calling, incessant mocking, and laughing at another child's expense (Sullivan et al., 2004).
15. *Victims*: in general, anxious, insecure, cautious people who suffer from low self-esteem, rarely defending themselves or retaliating when confronted. They tend to be physically weaker than their bullies (Harris & Petrie 2003).

Significance of the Study

Since bullying is a major factor undermining positive school climate and often a precursor to heightened school violence, understanding elementary school principals' perceptions about bullying, the training pertaining to bullying they receive, and the types of training they need to effectively address bullying in their schools is of utmost importance. Furthermore, understanding the prevalence of bullying in the various grade levels of elementary schools and the locations at which bullying takes place represents significant and useful information for furthering the prevention of bullying. Because of the damage resulting from bullying, it is morally and ethically important for school officials to understand how to discipline bullies rather than take the position that the children should learn to protect themselves (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). The results of this study are intended to provide elementary school principals with insights and knowledge needed to provide professional development to their staffs to prevent school bullying.

Overview

Chapter 1 briefly indicated the seriousness of bullying as reported by various studies. Olweus (1993) defined bullying as "being exposed repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students" (p.10). Harris and Petrie (2002) suggested that acts of bullying cause destructive behaviors that create difficulties for children to make positive connections with faculty and other students. Weinhold (2002) reported that educators around the world are not aware of the pervasiveness of bullying that can lead to violence.

Chapter 2 presents an extensive description of bullying. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used in this study. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings of the study. Chapter 5

presents the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further studies to support the needs of principals as they build an understanding of the seriousness of bullying in schools.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive picture of elementary school principals' perceptions of the definition of bullying, staff training needs, and prevalence of bullying by grade and location. Bullying, a form of violence among school children, is an old phenomenon often portrayed in literary works (Olweus, 1993). Rigby (1996) reported, "for countless generations children have been teasing, harassing, bullying one another, sometimes in fun, sometimes in deadly earnest, to the amusement, horror or indifference of others, whether they be parents, teachers or other children" (p. 11). Because it is cruel and repeated oppression, without justification over the powerless, bullying is an act of violence that should not be tolerated (Rigby, 1996).

Historical Context

The issue of school and youth violence is not new; violence committed by teens has occurred throughout American history. Even so, this violence has peaked in the last 40 years, resulting in the deaths and injuries of youths and adults around the nation. Violence is so prevalent in our society that although we may not experience it personally, we cannot escape it in the media. The issue has reached the attention of lawmakers and leaders (Hallowell, 2003). In the United States, violence in schools has become a huge issue.

The main body of research on the problem of bullying in schools was conducted in Scandinavia in the 1970s (Besag, 1989; Olweus, 1996). Bullying has received research attention only since the 1970s, when Daniel Olweus, a Norwegian researcher, became a pioneer in the area of bullying research. Olweus indicated that bullying in elementary and secondary school systems has always existed. This finding led to an important distinction for studies regarding solutions to the bullying problem that have typically recognized only the passive victim.

Bernstein and Watson (1977) conducted a survey of 770 teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. They significantly elaborated on the characteristics of bully victims by examining personal traits including physical size, gender, ethnicity, self-esteem, and intelligence. Interestingly, their findings concluded that children's physical size and gender had little impact

on the likelihood of their being targeted by bullies. This was quite significant, considering that it had been widely assumed that boys who were smaller than average for their size were most likely to find themselves the victim of a bully. They also found that victims tended to have lower grades in school. Similarly Salmon and James (1998) concluded that victims are less intelligent than non-victims. Research has been more conclusive in its findings that victims of bullying often have a tendency to score higher on questionnaires designed to measure lying (Salmon and James, 1998).

Olweus' book, *Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys* (1978), is considered a landmark, the first comprehensive study of the phenomenon of bullying. It is frequently cited in the major North American studies pertaining to bullying. In this work, Olweus first coined the term "whipping boy" to refer to a victim of bullying. The book received more interest in 1982, when a Scandinavian newspaper reported that three early-adolescent boys from Norway committed suicide as a result of being severely bullied. This triggered nationwide awareness of bullying and forced the acknowledgement of bullying as a worldwide problem. It was soon recognized as such in many countries, including the U.S., U.K., Ireland, Australia, Spain, Japan and Zimbabwe (O'Moore & Hillery, 1989; Slee & Rigby, 1993; Vieira da Fonseca et al., 1989; Yates & Smith, 1989; Yohji, 1996; Zindi, 1994). O'Moore and Hillery (1989), for instance, found that 54.9% of 738 seven to thirteen-year-old children in Dublin schools reported having been bullied occasionally (once or twice or sometimes) and 8% claimed that they had been frequently bullied (once a week or more often).

A 1984 study by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in the United States (Batsche & Knoff, 1994) reported that 25% of students surveyed stated that, "one of their most serious concerns was fear of bullies" (p.44). This study was also among the first to investigate the development of a bully and to seek to define the characteristics of victims. Batsche and Knoff (1994) made a connection between youth who experienced hostility, physical discipline, and little supervision at home with bully-type behavior at school. Researchers Batsche and Knoff (1994) concluded that the act of bullying comes from a desire to control others with the hopes of feeling more secure and less anxious than at home. Victims were classified into two categories: "high-aggressive" and "low-aggressive," identifying the victim as either "passive" or "provocative." Passive victims appear to do little to provoke attacks. They are anxious, insecure,

and equally unable to defend themselves. Victims who provoke are aggressive and attempt to retaliate.

Slee and Rigby (1993) also noted that bullies frequently exhibit symptoms of depression, which had been frequently suspected as a contributing factor to bullying. Slee and Rigby (1993) also found that bullying can and does occur in many different places, such as school, home, work, or on the sport field. School seems to be the most prevalent place at which bullying occurs.

Further research conducted by Olweus (1993) lists several effects of bullying. Some children experiencing bullying feel isolated or alienated at school. Long-term consequences to bullying lead to difficulties forming and maintaining friendships in life. Children who are called stupid or ugly develop poor self-esteem and lack confidence. Severe depression develops in some children to the point where they may hurt themselves or even attempt suicide. By 1994, the issue of bullying began to receive more professional attention as experts in the field of youth violence began to expand their definition of school violence to include bullying. Previously, most researchers only considered assault, theft, and vandalism as key arenas of youth violence (Olweus, 2000).

Olweus (1993) explained that there are three types of bullying: physical, verbal, and social. Physical bullying is action-oriented and intended to intimidate or physically hurt the victim through pinching, pushing, restraining, kicking, hitting, and destroying other's property (Bully B'ware, 2000; Beale, 2001). Verbal bullying consists of the use of words to humiliate or hurt someone's feelings through teasing, name-calling, insulting, or threatening. Social or relational bullying manipulates others to exclude and reject the victim so he or she is socially isolated. Such manipulation includes making faces, making dirty gestures, or causing social exclusion. Social bullying overlaps with verbal bullying when it involves "telling false stories about others, saying bad things behind people's backs, telling others not to be someone's friend and trying to persuade others to dislike a certain person" (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Social bullying can also take the form of physical bullying, as when a bully pushes the victim around and has his peers join in. Social bullying can also cause a bully's peers to be afraid to hang out with the victim for fear of being bullied themselves.

The Mental Health Association (2001) suggested that approximately 50% of children are bullied at some time during their school life, and 10% are bullied on a regular basis. Research

was conducted by Hanish (2000), documenting that a helpline, located in a city in South Texas, received approximately 7,000 calls concerning bullying in one year.

Key Vocabulary

Smith and Brian (2000) defined “bullying” as an aggressive behavior normally characterized by repetition and imbalance of power. While bullying may be considered normative in many group settings, it is socially unacceptable within the ethos of a democratic society.

Domains of Interest

Prevalence: When, Where and How

Today bullying is an issue that affects all children. It has become such a national concern that in early December 2003 the federal government announced bullying as a public health issue that warranted a \$3.4 million campaign to combat it. The campaign was supported by more than 70 education, law enforcement, civic, and religious groups. It included tools such as websites, animated web episodes, commercials and a network of nonprofit groups geared to help raise awareness of bullying and to offer tips on how to decrease bullying (Associated Press, 2004). Eslea and Smith (1999) reported that children in late primary years defined bullying in terms of an imbalance of power, which was more often verbal than physical. Also, Bynre (1999) indicated that the highest incidences of bullying in primary schools occurred among third and fourth graders. Additionally, Berthold and Hoover (2000) agreed that most bullying that transpired with this age group tended to be of a verbal nature (teasing and name calling) and that hitting and kicking occurred more with males.

Vettenburg (1999) reported that about two-thirds of the boys and girls who are bullied defend themselves against bullying. Yet, the same researcher also found that 40% of victims do not receive help from bystanders. Likewise, studies of bullying in Japan reported that 47.2% of students surveyed said that they would rather not step in to help victims (Morita et al., 1999). Additionally, student intervention in acts of bullying is more pronounced when friends are being bullied, which clearly indicates a correlation between student attitudes towards bullying and intervention (Vettenburg, 1999). Sadly, students watch acts of bullying and pretend nothing

happened because they feared that they would become new targets for the bully (Morita et al., 1999).

Vettenburg (1999) also found that incidences of bullying decreased from age ten to sixteen and were less pronounced among girls since the rate of girl bullying was less frequent than boys at a younger age. Additionally, Rigby and Slee (1999) reported that incidences of bullying in boys decreased from 50% at age eight to 7.5% at age eighteen. They also found that incidences of bullying in girls decreased from 35.3% at age eight to 14.5% at age eighteen. Although incidences of bullying decrease as children progress through school, the boys and girls who are identified as serious bully offenders remained constant year after year (Rigby & Slee, 1999; Vettenburg, 1999). Olweus (1999) indicated that bullies have a more positive attitude towards acts of violence, have strong impulsivity, and a powerful need to dominate other students.

Berthold and Hoover's study (2000) of bullying and victimization among intermediate schools in the Midwestern United States indicated that 20% of the students surveyed reported that they had bullied others. Also, in an exploratory study of 136 ninth graders in the South, Harris, Petrie and Willoughby (2002) reported that only 19% of the students who were surveyed indicated that bullying never occurred, while 50% indicated that they had observed bullying sometimes, and 29% indicated that they often observed bullying.

Bullies, in general, have a more positive attitude towards violence than most students and have little empathy toward their victims (Olweus, 1993; 1999). Olweus (1993) further suggested that bullies have a basic distrust of the fundamental principles of democracy and it is their goal to generate fear in children. Aggressive acts by bullies become problematic when bullies demonstrate an inflammatory personality, physical strength, a strong need to control others, and a tendency to over react aggressively in a confrontation. Moreover, aggressive behavior, including bullying, occurs more often between members of the same sex than between members of the opposite sex (Björkqvist & Österman, 1999).

Beane (1999) indicated that children today face bullying that is intense in both occurrence and severity. Today, the most common types of bullying take the form of name-calling, hitting and threatened (Smith, 1999). In fact, the most common type of bullying is name-

calling (Byrne, 1999; de Almeida, 1999; Mellor, 1999; Rigby & Slee, 1999; Smith, 1999; Vettenburg, 1999).

Males are more likely to be physically bullied, while girls are more likely to be verbally or psychologically bullied (Borg, 1999). Likewise, boys tend to be more physically aggressive, whereas girls tend to bully verbally. Bullies and victims of bullying have difficulty adjusting to their environments, both socially and psychologically. Victims of bullying have greater difficulty making friends and are lonelier than non-victims (Borg 1999). In their Young Children's Foundation study Rohan, Richardson, and Meerlinga (1999) identified some of the common characteristics of bullies: low self-esteem, self-centeredness, isolation, and victimization.

By observing bullying in the classroom, Atlas and Pepler (1998) reported that verbal aggression (name-calling) was observed in 53% of the episodes, physical aggression (hitting and kicking) was observed 30% of the time, and both physical and verbal aggression were observed 17% of the time. Leslie (as cited in Mellor, 1999) further indicated that the most common type of bullying was name-calling, followed by physical attacks, being threatened, being victims of theft, and being socially excluded.

There are opportune times for incidences of bullying at schools that need close attention by teachers and administrators (Ross, 1996). These include poor supervision by teachers and other periods of free play, recess, and transportation on school buses. Other favorable places for bullying to take place are classrooms, hallways, restrooms, to and from school, at extracurricular activities, at recess, and in the classroom (Willoughby, 2002). Additionally, Smith (1999) reported that the majority of bullying in primary schools occurs on the playground and reports of being bullied to or from school were less than being bullied in the classroom.

Mellor (1999) reported that 48% of the children surveyed reported that the most common place for bullying to occur was on the playground and 28% reported that the classroom was a common place for bullying to occur. Bacchini et al. (1999) indicated that 51.9% of middle school children reported that bullying occurred more frequently in the classroom and that bullying on the playground decreased significantly (Bacchini et al., 1999).

Ortega and Morta-Merchan (1999) reported that children 11-16 years of age indicated that the classroom, the playground, and corridors were places where bullying frequently occurred. Alasker and Brunner (1999) reported that about one-third of the students surveyed

indicated that bullying occurred frequently to and from school, on the playground, and in the classroom.

Bullying, occurring in the form of name-calling and teasing, is especially prominent among pre-adolescent girls (Vail, 2002; Wiseman, 2002). According to Vail, “adolescent and pre-adolescent girls wield enormous power over their peers. Their weapons are gossiping, name-calling, and excluding” (p. 14-15). “While these behaviors may not give girls black eyes or bloody lips, they can be as harmful as physical intimidation, violence, and racial slurs” (p. 15).

Wiseman (2002) further indicated that gossiping is popular among adults and teen girls. One distinction between teen girls and adults is that adults may understand that gossiping can be destructive and will cease the gossip before it hurts someone. Unfortunately, indirect ways of bullying, such as gossip, slander, spreading rumors, and exploiting friendships are primary weapons that girls use to humiliate each other, and as a result, they reinforce their own social status (Olweus, 1996; Siann, Callaghan, Glissov, Lockhart & Rawson, 1994; Wiseman, 2002).

Consequently, Siann et al. (1994) found that when women looked back on their own experiences of schooling, they admitted excluding other girls socially to the point that it was painful to other girls, and in fact, these same women also remembered being excluded to the point that it was hurtful. Whereas, principals may see their schools as very safe and feel that they are highly supportive of reducing bullying, students do not always consider their schools safe, nor do students view administration as supportive of reducing bullying. The principal of the school plays a vital role in the prevention of bullying. In fact, the principal’s leadership style and level of commitment, coupled with the attitudes and beliefs of teachers and parents, are significant factors in the reduction of bullying.

Principal Preparation

According to Harris and Hathorn (2006) principals have a different awareness of bullying than their students (Rigby, 1996). Harris and Petrie (2003,) emphasized, “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). They also acknowledged that educators must understand and identify the negative effects of bullying on the overall school climate and communicate the importance of eliminating acts of bullying to the entire school

campus. Additionally, Harris and Petrie (2003) report that students perceived nearly 60% of teachers and more than 70% of administrators as not being interested in reducing bullying on campuses.

Feinburg (2003) reports that principals can help their staff members and students take an honest look in the mirror and create an environment in which bullying is never tolerated and all students feel safe and valued. Most principals understand the global realities of the problem – that an estimated 15% to 30% of students nationwide are either bullies or victims; that bullying encompasses a spectrum of aggressive behaviors.

Hazler (1996) reports when trying to reduce bullying in a school, the entire school administration should agree upon and develop its own policy and procedures for dealing with discipline, which is followed by all school staff. In addition to implementing consistent discipline, all adults should model respectful and appropriate behavior. A positive school environment has been consistently found to be effective in the reduction of bullying (Olweus, 1993; Hazler, 1996). Administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents who are aware that bullying is a pervasive problem in schools and who take corrective measures to combat bullying, are more successful in providing needed help not only for the victim of bullying but also for the bully (Olweus, 1993).

Olweus and Kallestad (2003) found that 60% of the teachers were passive about intervening when a bullying problem took place in their classroom. Eighty-three percent (83%) of teachers report that class rules and class meetings were used less frequently than the Bullying Program recommended by Olweus and Kallestad (2003). One-half of the bullied children did not tell their teacher that they were being bullied (Olweus and Kallestad, 2003).

Historically, teachers have been less aware of bullying than students, in terms of its prevalence. They have believed that most bullying has been primarily in the form of hitting, kicking, and teasing of victims. Teachers have seen most bullying taking place on the playground followed by hallways and lunchrooms. “Teachers indicated that 27% of the victims and 33% of the bullies were receiving remedial education of one form or another” (Olweus, 1993).

Harris and Willoughby (2003) noted that often teachers identified bullying as a major problem in their school. These teachers supported the victims and wanted acts of bullying eliminated from their schools, but one in three indicated that they possessed limited capacities to

stop bullying. Teachers also admitted that even they were sometimes intimidated by bullies and believed that it is more the administrator's responsibility to confront and punish the bully (Rigby & Slee, 1991).

Juvonen et al. (2003) indicated that although teachers understand the social context of bullying they do not understand the best way to intervene in bullying and many times considered this a personal problem of the individual rather than a problem requiring a cooperative response. Unnever and Cornell's study (2003) of the culture of bullying in the middle school reported that 21% of the 2,472 students surveyed indicated that teachers "sometimes" tried to stop bullying and over one-third indicated that teachers tried to stop bullying only "once in a while." Additionally, Unnever and Cornell reported that 20% of these students indicated that teachers "almost never" tried to intervene in acts of bullying. The teacher and administrator can be vital links in bully prevention. Assumptions about bullying have to be considered. All assumptions about bullying must be considered including assumptions such as: bullying will make a child stronger, bullying is a normal part of maturation, or victims allow themselves to be bullied.

Astor and colleagues. (1999) reported that components of school violence, while recognized by teachers and students, have not been thoroughly researched. Thomsen (2002) argued that a commonality to the recent school shootings is that perpetrators of violence had been victims of psychological intimidation, harassment and bullying for a period of years. In fact, the most violent schools have a culture in which school bullying is intense (Unnever & Cornell, 2003; Will & Neufeld, 2003).

Astor and colleagues (1999) also concurred that the most effective violence prevention was the presence of teachers who were familiar with the students and were willing to intervene in a bullying incident. In fact, the greater number of teachers participating in supervision during recess and breaks lowered the level of bully and victim problems in the school (Olweus, 1993; Peterson & Skiba, 2001). Harris and Petrie (2003) also indicated that if school personnel are to be successful in preventing acts of bullying, they must develop caring school cultures, integrate parent participation programs, and establish and maintain school security procedures and safe school programs.

Roberts and Morotti (2000) suggested five specific approaches in dealing with bullies: (a) making a non-threatening contact with bullies, (b) listening to what the bully is saying through

his/her actions, (c) creating an opportunity for the bully to learn about self and create opportunities for change, (d) giving the bully attention and support, and (e) providing a long lasting follow-up (p.153). When the educator adapts these techniques to the child's age and the situation, children who exhibit aggressive and defiant behaviors are unable to explain their situations and justify their actions (Roberts & Morotti).

Actions Taken

In the article, *Shaping Safer Schools: A Bully Prevention Action Plan* (Safe Schools, 2005), school boards were urged to have bullying prevention policy include the following elements: (a) clear definition of bullying; (b) policy statement that prohibits bullying on school property, at school-sponsored events, and on school buses; (c) means of addressing the issue of protection from retaliation for those who report incidents; (d) information for concerned parents about who to contact, from the classroom through to the board level; and (e) bullying prevention committees made up of teachers, staff, parents, administrators, community and students that meet at least three times a year to review implementation and monitor effectiveness (p. 8). In an article from the U.S. Department of Education (2007), *Exploring the Nature and Prevention of Bullying*, it was reported that zero tolerance policies for aggressive, violent, or potentially violent behavior have become increasingly common in schools and districts across the country. While they vary with respect to the specific behaviors that will trigger the policy, as well as the consequences of those behaviors, all zero tolerance policies have the potential to hinder bullying prevention efforts. Zero tolerance policies run counter to the goal of bullying prevention programs to encourage students to report known or suspected bullying. Severe punishments for bullying, such as suspension or exclusion from school, may discourage students and staff from coming forward with their concerns about bullying (U.S.D.O.E. 2007).

Atlas and Pepler (1998) suggested that often it is difficult to intervene in bully instances. Even though bullying is pervasive in the classroom, teachers are generally unaware of bullying, and peer groups and classmates are unwilling to stop bullying. Therefore, it is reasonable that administrators provide more supervision at these places where children are at risk of being bullied (Junger-Tas, 1999; Olweus, 1993; Ross, 1996).

Hyman and Snook (2000) reported that escalating the punishment for bullies by using automatic and punitive type punishments, established a school ethos that many times is

poisonous for many children. For example, Ohsako (1999) indicated that in Columbia, South America, corporal punishment has led to negative effects on learning such as low self-esteem, a lack of interest in schooling, and increased depression and sadness. Successful bully intervention plans included immediate consequences, such as removal of privileges, peer disapproval of bullying, and rewards for non-aggressive actions (Ross, 1996).

Additionally, behaviors that are either harmful or seen as intentionally harmful should be targeted by successful intervention programs (Gumpel & Meaden, 2000). Consequently, the attitudes and behaviors of school personnel can be a crucial factor in preventing and controlling bullying. In fact, school-wide intervention programs should establish acceptable behaviors for children; provide opportunities for teachers to get to know children, and to show students that the teachers accept diversity (Wiggins, 2002).

Successful intervention programs inform adults and caregivers that there is a bullying problem (Olweus, 2003; Eslea & Smith, 1998; Byrne, 1999). Olweus (1999) indicated that school personnel could redirect bullying behaviors into more socially accepted channels and if bullying at schools is to cease, the attitudes of the parents and students towards bullying have to be changed. Although Harris and Willoughby (2003) indicated that teachers must recognize where bullying takes place and must build trusting relationship with their students, administrators must provide much needed support for teachers.

School support should include staff development and opportunities for students and teachers to engage in class discussions about bullying (Harris & Willoughby, 2003). Additionally, Willoughby (2002) suggested that until teachers and administrators communicate to students their intent to stop bullying, then bullying would continue to be a contentious issue that plagues our schools. Accordingly, if adults are interested in helping a child cope effectively with anxiety such as bullying, the adult must accept the child's appraisal of the situation as fact and work from that position (p. 70).

Astor et al. (1999) also concurred that the most effective violence prevention was the presence of teachers who were familiar with the students and were willing to intervene in a bullying incident. In fact, the greater number of teachers participating in supervision during recess and breaks lowered the level of bully and victim problems in the school (Olweus, 1993; Peterson & Skiba, 2001). Harris and Petrie (2003) also indicated that if school personnel are to

be successful in preventing acts of bullying, they must develop caring school cultures, integrate parent participation programs, and establish and maintain school security procedures and safe school programs.

Garrity et al., (1997) indicated that in order to create a safe and positive school culture, students should demand that they treat each other with respect. Additionally, Olweus (1999) indicated that successful bully intervention must: (a) provide a caring and encouraging participation from adults, (b) develop firm but non-hostile, non-physical sanctions to bullies, and (c) promote adult supervision at home and at school (p.9).

Peterson and Skiba (2001) pointed out that additional practices have been successful in bully prevention. They indicated bully prevention programs that include improving supervision, establishing classroom rules against bullying, creating positive and negative consequences for bullying, result in less bullying. Additionally, Peterson and Skiba indicated that bullying can be lessened by talking seriously with both bullies and victims and by developing prevention plans that encouraged a safe and positive school climate. They further suggested that successful bully prevention programs inform children about the seriousness of bullying. This is accomplished by providing professional staff development, encouraging school officials to meet with the parents of bullies and victims, and periodically holding customary classroom meetings that inform children about the serious implications of bullying.

Rigby (1996) and Harris and Petrie (2002) described important aspects of effective bully prevention. They indicated that creating a positive school climate, creating a positive school ethos, and developing a school culture of tolerance for others also played an important role in bully prevention. As stated by Harris and Petrie (2002), “students who fear being bullied, teased, or taunted, who are frustrated, lonely, or misunderstood, or have other negative feelings are likely to perform poorly socially, as well as academically” (p. 65). Educators, whose educational ideology is based upon belonging and caring among students, faculty, and parents, were the most successful in creating a supportive and safe climate (Harris & Petrie, 2002; Sturdy 1999).

Timo Nuutinen became interested in bully intervention when he was shocked to learn how frequently violent acts of bullying, such as tripping a victim in school or hitting someone in the nose, had caused severe injuries. In the 1980s Nuutinen’s slide show became admired and was extensively used in every school in Finland (Björkqvist & Österman, 1999). The purpose of

the Nuutinen slide show was to dramatically demonstrate the effects of bullying through pictures and melodramatic descriptions. In order to demonstrate the pervasiveness of bullying, the slide show provided information about the consequences of bullying. By watching the slides, pupils felt increased empathy for the victims (Björkqvist & Österman, 1999).

Unever and Cornell (2003) and Smith (1999) reported that another successful bully prevention program was the whole-school program. The purpose of the whole-school approach was to promote a school climate that promotes trust between the students and the adults, and that includes adult who respond firmly but fairly in bullying cases (Smith, 1999). Also, Unever and Cornell (2003) indicated that the whole-school approach is effective because it restructures the school climate by changing the attitudes of students who either are unsure about how they feel about bullying or by changing the attitudes of students who support bullying.

The specific goals of the whole-school approach were to increase communication with parents, increase supervision at breaks, incorporate anti-bullying curriculum and develop non-physical, non-punitive sanction policies (Harachi et al., 1999; Smith, 1999). The whole-school approach used a variety of intervention plans that systematically use specific measures at the school, class, and individual levels (Olweus, 1999). Unever and Cornell (2003) indicated that, in order for the whole-school approach to be effective, aggressive and violent behaviors associated with a culture of bullying should be changed.

The curriculum of the whole-school approach involved: (a) holding workshops and conferences (de Almeida, 1999; Rigby & Slee, 1999); (b) developing surveys that raise the awareness of bullying (Rigby & Slee, 1999); (c) involving the community in anti-bullying projects (Sullivan, 1999; Mellor, 1999; Byrne, 1999); (d) using video that demonstrates the physical damage that occurs in victimization (Smith; Bacchinni et al., 1999); (e) using drama to demonstrate the detrimental effects of victimization (de Almeida 1999; Smith, 1999); (f) increasing supervision on the playground (de Almeida, 1999; Smith, 1999); (g) improving playground equipment (de Almeida, 1999; Smith, 1999); and (h) using assertiveness training in order to empower children to effectively interact with bullies (Smith, 1999).

The key role of principals in all intervention programs should be to create a school environment that is characterized by caring, positive interests, the involvement of parents and firm limits for unacceptable behaviors (Olweus, 1993). School climates that encouraged

authoritative methods in dealing with children actually modeled bullying behaviors for children (Hyman & Snook, 2000; Mayer, 2001; Ohsako, 1999). Since bullies often come from troubled families who use harsh physical punishment as discipline measures (Harachi et al., 1999; Junger-Tas, 1999), disciplining bullies with a “tit-for-tat” corporal punishment policy reinforces the bully’s belief that the use of power is the best method in which to handle and successfully remedy negative confrontations (Garrity et al., 1997).

Successful intervention programs inform adults and caregivers that there is a bullying problem (Byrne, 1999; Eslea & Smith, 1998; Olweus, 1993). Olweus (1999) indicated that school personnel could redirect bullying behaviors into more socially accepted channels and, if bullying at schools is to cease, the attitudes of the parents and students towards bullying have to be changed. Although Harris and Willoughby (2003) indicated that teachers must recognize where bullying takes place and must build trusting relationship with their students, administrators must provide much needed support for teachers.

Schools support should include staff development and opportunities for students and teachers to engage in class discussions about bullying (Harris & Willoughby, 2003). Willoughby (2002) also suggested that until teachers and administrators communicate to students their intent to stop the bullying, then bullying would continue to be a contentious issue that plagues schools. Accordingly, if adults are interested in helping a child cope effectively with anxiety such as bullying, the adult must accept the child’s appraisal of the situation as fact and work from that position (Willoughby, p. 70.).

Harris and Willoughby (2003) emphasized the role of administrators in intervention by stating, “Administrators who support teachers in recognizing the problem of bullying, in building strong relationships with students, whose actions show that they are willing to help, and who have the skills to know how to help, will increase social, emotional, and academic opportunities that foster learning for all students” (p. 16)

Harris, Petrie, and Willoughby (2002) also suggested that administrators should implement the following interventions to circumvent bullying at schools: (a) conduct annual surveys to inform anti-bullying strategies applicable to that school population, (b) share the survey with staff members to enhance awareness of when and where bullying takes place, (c) share the survey with the community and the parents, (d) discuss openly the problem with the

students in an open dialogue format, (e) increase supervision in areas where students are at risk, (f) provide staff development concerning student support and how to respond to incidences of bullying, (g) adopt policies dealing with disciplining the bully, and (h) build a positive school climate where children are cared for and loved (p. 45).

Additionally, Frawley (2000) recommended that successful bully prevention programs should include a five-step approach. These steps include: (a) acknowledge student-to-student cruelty in the school; (b) develop a highly visible intervention and prevention program; (c) address verbal and physical bullying in the female population; (d) address new student abilities to stop bullying; (e) develop student services which identify and deal with perpetrator; and (f) support victims and bystanders (p.8).

Research and Synthesis

Three studies were selected for review. Each study focused on the perceptions of bullying in schools. Information from the perspective of principals, teachers and ninth grade students was collected.

In the first study by Smith, Cousins, and Stewart (2005), *Anti-bullying Interventions in Schools: Ingredients of Effective Programs*, was reviewed because bullying is a serious problem in Canadian schools and anti-bullying programs have been widely implemented to redress the problem. School principals in Ontario completed a questionnaire to document the severity of bullying, the amount of anti-bullying resources, and the various anti-bullying activities in their schools.

In their study, Smith, Cousins, and Stewart (2005) contacted the directors of all 90 English language public and Catholic school boards in Ontario to request permission to recruit school principals in their districts to participate in a survey of school-based anti-bullying program. They received positive responses from 43 school boards with a total of 3,106 member schools. Administrators answered question related to the characteristics of the school and the student body. Twelve items probed the nature and severity of bullying problems at the school, including incidents of direct bullying (name calling, physical attacks, or stealing). The study inventoried current interventions and services in the school intended to deal with bullying and its effects. The last section probed a school's efforts to evaluate its anti-bullying programs.

Results reveal that reductions in bullying in previous years, sufficiency of resources for resolving bullying, and amounts of anti-bullying programming were all positively associated with anti-bullying program outcomes. The data suggest that the investment of time, effort, and money in school-based anti-bullying initiatives can lead to safer and more peaceful schools environments. The Smith, Cousins, and Stewart's (2005) data showed that the positive impact of programs did not appear in the short term but over longer intervals, such as one to five years. This finding suggests that programs need time to penetrate a school culture and influence attitudes and behaviors of students and school personnel. Data support the view that solutions to bully/victim problems require adequate resources because the schools' ratings of a variety of program outcomes were directly related to the amount of programming and the sufficiency of resources brought to bear on the problem.

In the second study, *Teachers' Perceptions of Student Bullying Behaviors*, by Harris and Willoughby (2003), Lauzarus' theory of stress and coping (1996) was used to identify the components of stress as three constantly-transitioning categories: daily hassles (giving a report in front of the class), chronic life strains (not being able to participate in recess due to health issues), and major life events (death or divorce). Harris and Willoughby (2003) found that victims of bullying experience stress as a daily hassle, such as being teased occasionally, which can escalate into the level of a major life event when feelings of helplessness and hopelessness become overpowering (Ross, 1999). Three major elements must be in place before bullied students or bystanders seek help from teachers: (a) a relationship of trust must exist between teachers and students, (b) teachers must be willing to accept the challenge of supporting students to reduce bullying, and (c) teachers must have the skills to be able to respond appropriately to the bully, the victim, and the bystander (Harris & Willoughby, 2003, p. 6).

There is general agreement that even simple acts of bullying can lead to stressful situations for children, and teacher support is critical in helping students deal with these stress-inducing events (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1996; Ross, 1996). While bullying must be addressed in a united front by all school personnel, parents, and students, there is no doubt that the role of the teacher is tremendously powerful in reducing bullying on school campus.

Rigby (1996) reported that teachers in Australia overwhelmingly were aware that bullying occurred on their school campuses and wanted to see something done to correct it.

Rigby & Slee (1995) reported that over 30% of students there perceived that teachers are not particularly interested in stopping bullying or are only somewhat interested. There is general agreement that even simple acts of bullying can lead to stressful situations for children and teacher support is critical in helping them deal with these stress-inducing events (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1996; Ross, 1996).

One of the most frequently recommended ways to prevent bullying at school is to involve adults in working with both bully and victim (Lazarus, 1966; Olweus, 1993; Ross, 1966). Findings from this study indicated that while teachers perceived that bullying was occurring often on their campuses and they considered it to be quite stressful, they still did not give it the highest priority of their support. They believed that colleagues were even less concerned than they were in reducing bullying. This is particularly important, because when teachers question the support of their own co-workers, it follows that students will share this same concern.

The third study reviewed was *Ninth Grade Hispanic Students' Perceptions of Bullying at School in Texas* conducted by Harris, Willoughby, and Perez (2003). The study was based on the assumption that bullying is a serious problem among secondary school students.. It has been suggested that the perpetrators of instances like the tragedy of Columbine were responding to frustration from being bullied over long periods of time (Lindsey, 2001). Although bullying has been documented as a problem around the world (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1996), the extent of the problem for ninth grade Hispanic students has not been identified. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to explore incidences of bullying that occur within the ninth grade Hispanic community in Texas.

The primary research question explored was how ninth grade Hispanic students perceived bullying in their Texas high school. The question was subdivided into a series of questions in the following four areas: (1) What was the incidence of different kinds of bullying, where did it happen on campus, and what was the perceived hurtfulness of the behavior? (2) Which students were being bullied, how were they bullied and how hurtful did they perceive bullying to be? (3) Who was doing the bullying on campus? and (4) Whom did students tell, what happened after they told, and why did they report or not report bullying? (p 87).

Sixty-eight teachers enrolled in a university principal-preparation program were surveyed regarding their perceptions of bullying among students on their campuses. Forty-three-percent of

participants were male and 57% were female. The majority (72%) of teachers were Anglo with 13% African American and 15% Hispanic. Teachers represented all five district sizes in Texas which are categorized by size: 8% were from 4A schools and 10% were from 5A schools, the largest category. Teachers represented a fairly balanced ratio of all levels of kindergarten through twelfth grade schools, with 32% teaching in kindergarten through fifth grade schools, 29% teaching in middle schools, and 38% teaching in high schools.

Students were surveyed in seven schools in Texas during their ninth grade English I class. Two of the schools were urban, two were suburban, and three were rural. A total population of 2,100 students was surveyed. The Hispanic sample was disaggregated from the population leaving a sample of 202 ninth grade students self-declared as Hispanic and in grade nine.

Harris, Willoughby, and Perez (2002) reported that bullying was an important issue for Texas schools to address. It occurred often yet teachers and administrators were sending mixed messages to students about their interest in stopping bullying. Many of the ninth grade Hispanic students did not feel safe at school. They suggested that the perceptions of not being interested in bullying needs to be changed to one of caring about students' well-being at school.

The survey used in the Harris, Willoughby, and Perez study (2002) was adapted and revised from the Peer Relations Questionnaire by Rigby and Slee (1995). Investigators revised this instrument for use in the United States and pilot tested the survey in ten schools in the South. Teachers participating in the survey were asked to tell about a bullying on their campus within the past year. The survey included 33 multiple choice questions such as, how often does bullying occur, where does it occur, describe bullying behaviors, how many students have reported about bullying, and what strategies do teachers use to reduce bullying. The survey also included one open-ended question which asked participants to respond generally to the problem of bullying on their campus (Harris & Willoughby 2003).

Summary

Current literature offers little information from the principal's perceptions on bullying. In the Smith, Cousins, and Stewart (2005) study on anti-bullying interventions, the perspective of school principals was solicited because principals are commonly in the position of selecting or

approving these programs and therefore understand the nature of the programs, the way they are implemented, and the impact they have across the school environment.

Harris, Willoughby, and Perez (2003) found that one of the most frequently recommended ways to prevent bullying at school was to involve adults in working with both bully and victim (Olweus 1993, Lazarus 1966, Ross, 1996). Harris and Willoughby (2003) reported that three things must be in order for the teacher to help reduce the daily stress of bullying: (a) a relationship of trust must exist between the teacher and the student; (b) the teacher willing to accept the challenge of supporting students; and (c) the teacher must have the skills to be able to respond appropriately to the bully, the victim, and the bystander (p. 10).

From the perspective of the student, Harris and Willoughby (2003) found that many ninth grade Hispanic students did not feel safe at school, because bullying is a part of their daily lives. Harris and Willoughby (2003) found that faculty must be involved in training to become more comfortable about talking about bullying with students, because all adolescents should be able to focus on academics during school and not have bullying behavior be a barrier to learning.

Olweus (1978) found that a school-wide foundation offers universal interventions. A value system based on caring, respect, and personal responsibility, positive discipline and supports, clear behavioral expectations and consequences, skills development, and increased adult supervision and parental involvement will reduce bullying by 50% (p 32).

Because information about bullying from the perceptions of the principal is limited in the research, this study examined the levels of perceptions of elementary principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia regarding how to deal with bullying in their school buildings.

Overview

Chapter Two presented an extensive description of bullying through the literature review. Chapter Three presents the methodology and Chapter Four summarizes the findings of the study. Chapter Five presents the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further studies to support the needs of principals as they build their understanding of bullying in elementary schools.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify Virginia Elementary School Principals' perceptions of bullying. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are Virginia elementary principals' perception and understanding of bullying?
 - a. What is the most common definition principals use to describe bullying?
 - b. Where and in what grades in their school buildings do principals think bullying occurs?
2. What is the level of training Virginia elementary principals receive and what training do they perceive as important for understanding bullying?
 - a. What training do principals report having in relation to the topic of bullying?
 - b. What areas of training on the topic of bullying do principals perceive as important?

The study gathered information on the types of bullying training provided for principals and the types of bullying training principals believed they needed to ensure a positive school climate in their buildings. Data was analyzed in relation to each principal's definition of bullying.

Bullying is not innocent teasing, as elementary school educators may perceive. Bullying is an imbalance of power where a more powerful child shows dominant strength over a less powerful child (Olweus, 1993). Bullying is more prevalent at the elementary level than in the upper grades (Olweus 1993). Vettenburg (1999) reports that incidences of bullying decreased in school children from ages 10 to 16. Additionally, Rigby and Slee (1999) reported that incidences of bullying in boys decreased from 50% at age 8 to 7.5% at age 18 and bullying in girls decreased from 35.3% at age 8 to 14.5% at age 18 (Rigby & Slee 1999; Vettenburg, 1999). Being a victim is most common in the second grade, and the likelihood of being bullied decreases each year after that (Olweus, 1993).

Research indicated that principals play a key role in developing a school atmosphere that facilitates a safe and bully-free environment (Harris, 2004). Additionally, Harris found that when

adults are aware, when they build trusting relationships, when they accept the challenge to provide support, and when they have the skills to know how to help hurting students, schools will be safer for everyone.

Research Method

This study used descriptive design, utilizing a survey adapted from the Harris/Petrie Bullying Survey (2002) (Appendix A). The survey was revised with permission from Dr. Sandra Harris (Appendix B). The survey was used because Dr. Harris reported that it has been successfully implemented in multiple studies. Dr. Harris' survey has been used to gather data on perceptions of bullying from the perspectives of principals, teachers and students. The survey (Appendix C) was revised to explore what training elementary school principals have received and what training principals believe they need to understand the definition of bullying and the prevalence of bullying by grade level and location.

Sample

The Commonwealth of Virginia has approximately 485 elementary school principals. For descriptive research, it is common to sample 10 to 20% of the population (Gay & Airasian 2000). For this study, 50% of elementary principals in Virginia (except elementary principals from Prince William County Public Schools) were systematically selected to participate in the study. Electronic mail addresses for all principals in the Virginia were obtained from the Virginia Department of Education. The addresses represented principals appointed to their positions prior to September 1, 2007. Demographic information was limited to the experience of each principal and the size of each school.

Instrumentation

Construction of the Instrument

Survey research involves collecting data in order to answer questions about the current status of the subject or topic of study (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The Harris/Petrie Bullying Survey (2002), which has been used in multiple dissertations, was adapted and revised with permission from Dr. Harris. Dr. Harris concurred that there is a need to collect data concerning the principal's role in dealing with bullying. The revised Harris/Petrie Bullying Survey (2002) was

piloted among elementary principals in Prince William County. Elementary principals were directed to complete the survey individually then comment on the length of the survey and the amount of time it took to complete the instrument. Additionally, principals shared information about other options that should be added to the *Training Topic* segment of the survey. Feedback concerning location of bullying behaviors and types of bullying behaviors was solicited. Revisions were made to the survey based on the principals' feedback. The dissertation committee evaluated the survey after revisions were made based on principals' comments. The committee organized questions into segments addressing specific issues surrounding bullying.

The reliability of the Harris/Petrie Bullying Survey (2002) instrument was measured by the Spearman-Brown split half at .78 for the equals and .78 for the unequal. When a reliability analysis was conducted using Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS), the reliability coefficient alpha was .6315, which is in the acceptable range.

The survey consisted of five parts. In the first part, principals were given three choices and asked to select a definition of bullying closest to the definition used in the principal's school. The second part asked for specific information about the topics included in administrative training for the prevention of bullying. Principals were asked if they had received training and how important it was to have training in each area. The third part of the survey asked principals to identify the frequency of bullying behaviors by grade levels and the fourth section asked principals to indicate the frequency and types of bullying in certain locations in the school building. Open ended questions, in the fifth section, asked about other training topics that should be explored by principals to prevent bullying, the amount of clock hours principals have participated in bully training, and the number of years each respondent has served as a principal.

Data Collection

Permission for employees to participate in the study was requested (Appendix D) and obtained from Offices of Research and Accountability of local school districts. Surveys were e-mailed to principals who serve in elementary schools across the state of Virginia. After completing the surveys, principals were asked to submit their responses directly to the SurveyMonkey website.

Initially, the survey was electronically mailed to 243 Virginia elementary school principals. Two mailings were sent to the principals. The first invitation (Appendix E) to participate in the survey was mailed in early December 2007. Within the first two weeks, 84 principals responded to the survey. Approximately 25 principals' emails were returned marked undeliverable. Seven respondents returned notes explaining that they were no longer elementary principals. A reminder notice and thank you note (Appendix F) were sent in mid December 2007, after which 51 additional principals responded. A third request was not needed because the response rate goal of 60% had been exceeded after two invitations. Individual respondents were not identified on the survey, thus e-mail notices were sent to all principals on each occasion. Sixty additional surveys were returned prior to closing the survey on line. The total number of responses received was 195 which represented an 80.2% percent response rate.

Data was reported based on principals' years of experience in their current school buildings. Comments were reported for principals with 0-5 years of experience, 6-10 years of experience, 11-15 years of experience and 15 + years of experience. Information was analyzed based on school membership. Responses from principals with total student membership of less than 400, 401-600, 601-800, 801-1000, or more than 1000 was reported. Additionally, an analysis of responses by principals' definition of bullying was reported.

Methods of Analysis

Descriptive statistics using SurveyMonkey and JMP Software for Basic Univariate and Multivariate Statistics (2005) were calculated to report categorical information about principals' perception of bullying, the training they have received, and principals' perception of specific training needs.

Assumptions and Limitations

An assumption is any important "fact" presumed to be true but not actually verified (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The assumptions in this study were the following:

1. All survey responses were completed honestly and returned in a timely manner.
2. Elementary principals' responses were biased due to the fact that they are concerned about the possibility of revealing their schools' bully problems.

3. Elementary principals wanted to address the perceived or real problems with bullying in their schools/classrooms.

Gay and Airasian (2000) defined limitations as “an aspect of a study which the researcher knows may negatively affect the results or generalizability of the results, but over which he or she has no control” (p.625). Limitations for this study include the following:

1. This study was limited to elementary school principals’ perceptions and knowledge of bullying. Findings will be limited to principals since students, counselors, and parents did not have input into the study.
2. This study did not encompass all elementary school principals in the country.
3. This study was limited to a sample, not the universe, of elementary principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
4. This study was limited by the degree to which participants respond openly and honestly.

Summary

Chapter Three discussed the methodology used in this study which included purpose of the study, research questions, research design, method of data collection and data analysis. Chapter Four summarizes the findings of the study. Chapter Five presents the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further studies to support the needs of principals as they build their understanding of bullying in elementary schools.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to provide more in-depth knowledge of elementary school principals' perceptions of bullying. The study investigated, specifically, how they defined bullying, how prevalent bullying was on each grade level and in specific locations, and what are their training needs. There is extensive literature about bullying among children. However, a gap exists in the literature regarding school administrator preparation for addressing bullying behaviors.

This study is an investigation of the perceptions of what types of training principals have received to deal with bullying and what types of training they believe are important to address bully prevention in their school buildings. Principals' definitions of bullying used in their schools are included in the study. The training topics were grouped according to the areas in which principals received training: (a) prevention of bullying, (b) staff training, (c) groups affected by bullying, and (d) behaviors associated with bullying in schools. Three definitions were selected from the research literature because they represented a variety of specific components associated with bullying behaviors. Definitions ranged from a simple statement about physical and verbal aggression, to a more complex statement used by the Olweus (1993) training program and from definitions of bullying used by two of the largest school districts in Virginia. The frequency of bullying behaviors by grade level, location, and type were also studied. Specific questions addressed included: (a) the number of clock hours principals had attended bullying training, (b) each principal's years of experience in his or her current school and in the role of principal, and (c) the total student membership of each principal's school.

The following research questions were asked:

1. What are Virginia elementary principals' perception and understanding of bullying?
 - a. What is the most common definition principals use to describe bullying?
 - b. Where and in what grades in their school buildings do principals think bullying occurs?
2. What is the level of training Virginia elementary principals receive and what training do they perceive as important for understanding bullying?

- c. What training do principals report having in relation to the topic of bullying?
- d. What areas of training on the topic of bullying do principals perceive as important?

The revised Harris/Petrie Bullying Survey (2002) was used to determine the participants' perceptions of bullying and the amount of training related to bullying issues experienced by them. Principals were asked to indicate whether they had training in several topics within each major topic group of bullying. For the same topics, they were then asked how important it was to have training in the topic specified as important aspects of bully prevention training, determined by Harris and Petrie (2002). Principals in Virginia were also surveyed on their understanding of bullying, the amount of training they have received, and what additional staff development needs they perceived would help effectively deal with the problem of bullying in their schools.

Research Methods

The online questionnaire measuring principals' perceptions of bullying was based on definitions, prevalence of bullying and training for bullying prevention was developed by revising an existing instrument, namely, the Harris/Petrie Survey 2002. Harris gave approval for revision and use of the questionnaire (see Appendix B). In their study, Harris and Petrie (2002) surveyed all school personnel. For this study, the questionnaire was adjusted to include questions specific to administrators only. The revised questionnaire used in this study included the identical topics as those surveyed by Harris and Petrie (2002). The revised questionnaire included a section that used the same response sets: *had they had training* and *how important was that training*.

The survey instrument was pilot tested using 20 elementary principals from Prince William County Public Schools who provided feedback related to the clarity of the survey items and the length of time needed to complete the survey. Principals also provided feedback concerning location of bullying behaviors and types of bullying behaviors in their school buildings. Specifically, S. Porter, a principal of an elementary school reported that she had not considered exclusion, shunnings and name calling as types of bullying until she completed the pilot survey (personal communication, December 3, 2007). Revisions were made to the instrument based on the principals' feedback. A pre-prospectus meeting was held to clarify survey design and questions. The dissertation committee, Dr. John Eller, Dr. Walt Mallory, Dr.

Pamelia Brott and Dr. Wayne Ralston, organized questions into segments addressing specific issues surrounding bullying. Principals were also asked to specify how much training in clock hours they received and what types of training they believe are important for dealing effectively with bullying in their schools. Additionally, pilot participants recommended that the instrument be designed to allow respondents to skip individual items. The instrument was revised to accommodate this recommendation.

After receiving IRB approval from Virginia Tech (see Appendix G) and permission from the various participating public school district Offices of Research and Accountability, the questionnaire was electronically mailed to 243 Virginia elementary school principals, which constituted a sequential sampling of half of the elementary principals employed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). This number of participants exceeded the common sampling size for descriptive research (Gay & Airasian, 2000). This first invitation to participate in the survey was mailed in early December 2007.

Initially, a response rate goal of 62% was set by the researcher and supported by the dissertation committee. In order to ensure that participation rate, a strategy was developed to provide follow-up. A total of two mailings was sent to principals within the Commonwealth. Within the first two weeks, 84 principals responded to the survey. A reminder notice and thank you note was sent in mid December 2007, to which 51 additional principals responded. As the goal for responses was met after the second mailing, a third mailing was not needed. Individual respondents were not identified on the survey, thus email notices were sent to all principals on each occasion. Once the response rate goal of 62% was met, no other reminders were sent. The total number of responses received was 195, which represented a response rate of 80.2%.

Data from the survey, which was posted on SurveyMonkey, were imported into JMP Software for Univariate and Multivariate Statistics (2005). Before running statistical analyses, data were checked for accuracy and identified errors were corrected. Data were printed onto hard copies and saved electronically. Data from 195 surveys were used. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the questionnaire responses using the JMP software (2005).

Results of Survey

Elementary school principals (n=195) in the Commonwealth of Virginia were surveyed. Data were reported in percentages of respondents rather than percentages of responses, due to the fact that the instrument was designed to allow respondents to skip individual questions if they chose to do so. Non-responses were treated as missing data. The results are reported here according to the sections of the survey.

Definitions of Bullying

The first set of data reported in this chapter was related to the definition of bullying that principals indicated was closest to the definition of bullying used in their school buildings. Respondents may or may not have answered this question. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses to question one, see Table 2 below.

Table 2

Definitions of Bullying

Definitions of Bullying	n	%
Bullying is unwarranted attention demonstrating an imbalance of power. The actions happen repetitively, over time.	44	22.7
Bullying is physical and/or verbal aggression toward others.	14	7.3
Bullying is any words or actions that harm or threaten another person's body, property, self esteem, or group acceptance, including oral, written, electronic, nonverbal forms of ridicule or intimidation.	135	70.0
Total Number of Responses	193	

Most principals reported the definition of bullying used in their schools was, "Bullying is any words or actions that harm or threaten another person's body, property, self esteem, or group acceptance, including oral, written, electronic, nonverbal forms of ridicule of intimidation" (71.4%). The second largest group of principals chose as their definition, "Bullying is unwarranted attention demonstrating an imbalance of power. The actions happen repetitively, overtime" (23.3%); and, the smallest group chose "Bullying is physical and/or verbal aggression toward others" (14%).

Administrative Training Topics

In the second group of questions, principals were asked to respond to statements concerning previous administrative training for the prevention of bullying in their elementary schools and rate the importance of each training topic. Each respondent was asked to answer a two-part question, “Have you had training in each area listed and how important would additional training be in each area?” Every respondent did not answer all questions in this segment. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses, see Table 3 below.

Table 3

Principals’ Responses to Administrative Areas of Training: Previous Training and Importance of Training

Areas of Administrative Training	Have Had Training				Importance of Training					
	Yes		No		Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The Principal’s role in preventing bullying	153	79.7	39	20.3	126	83.4	21	13.9	4	2.6
Training staff in bullying prevention	150	78.1	42	21.8	134	89.9	14	9.4	1	0.7
Developing school policies to prevent bullying	148	77.4	43	22.5	131	86.2	19	12.5	2	1.3
The role of central office in supporting bullying prevention	114	59.6	77	40.3	90	57.0	63	39.9	5	3.2
Developing a climate for safety in the school building	177	92.1	15	7.8	138	95.2	6	4.1	1	0.7
Helping teachers address bullying in their classrooms	154	80.2	38	19.7	138	92.0	11	7.3	1	0.7
Designing a school-wide bullying prevention program	129	66.8	64	33.1	116	75.8	31	20.3	6	3.9
Implementing a school-wide bullying prevention program	129	67.1	63	32.8	116	77.3	30	20.0	4	2.7

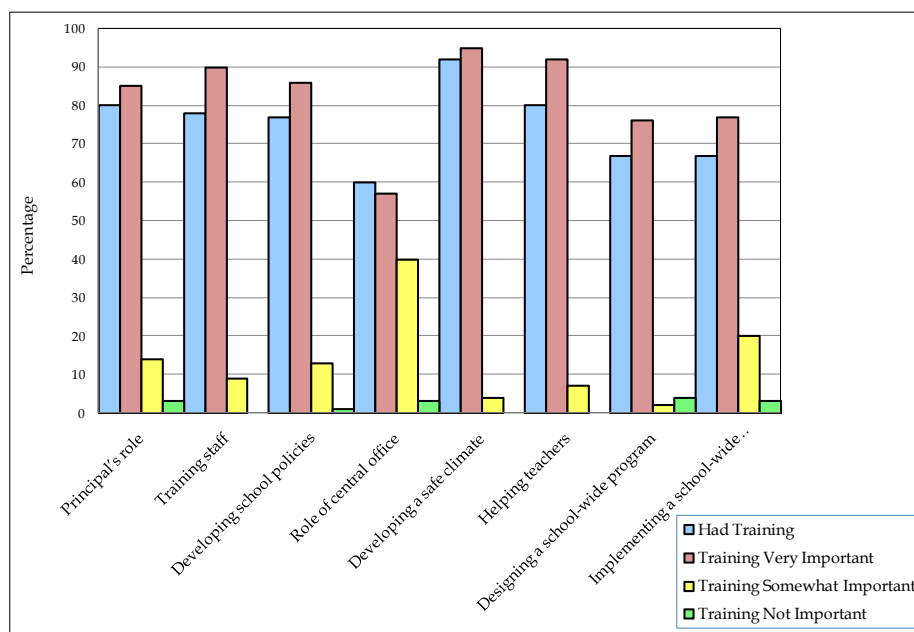


Figure 2. *Principals' Responses to Administrative Training*

Over half of all respondents reported that they had some bullying training in each of the eight areas related to administrators. The lowest percentage of respondents indicated training was for “the role of the central office in supporting bullying” (59.6%). This was followed by “designing a school wide-program” (66.8%) and “implementing a school-wide program” (79.7%). Respondents indicated most often that they had training in the areas of “helping teachers address bullying their classroom” (92.1%), “developing a climate for safety in the school building” (80.2%), and the “principal’s role in preventing bullying” (80.0%).

Regarding the importance of the training, the two highest areas rated *very important* by principals were “developing a climate for safety in their school building (95.2%) and “helping teachers address bullying” (92.0%). The third topic rated very important was “training staff in bullying prevention” (89.9%). Respondents indicated that the least important area was “central office support in bullying prevention” (43.1%).

Although 20.3% of respondents did not have training regarding the principals’ role in preventing bullying, only 2.6% indicated that this training was not important. Twenty-two percent (21.8%) indicated that they had training in “helping staff in bullying prevention,” 21.8% of principals did not have training, and 0.7% believed training in this area was not important. For training in “developing school policies to prevent bullying,” 22.5% of the respondents did not

have training, and 1.3% believed that training was not important. When asked about training in the “role of central office in supporting bullying prevention,” 40.3% of respondents had not received training, and 3.2% indicated the training in the area was not important. In the area of “developing a climate for safety in the school building,” only 7.8% of principals reported that they did not receive training in this area, and 0.7% reported this type of training was not important in bully prevention. When asked if they had received training in “helping teachers address bullying in their classrooms,” 19.7% of the respondents replied they did not receive any and 0.7% of the respondents believe that training in this area was not important. Respondents reported that 31.1% had not been trained in “designing a school-wide bullying prevention program,” and 3.9% reported training in this area was not important. In “implementing a school wide bullying prevention program,” 32.8% of the respondents reported they had not had training, and 2.7% reported that training was not important in this area.

Staff Engagement in the Prevention of Bullying

The third group of questions asked principals to respond to statements concerning areas of training they had pertaining to their staffs’ engagement in the prevention of bullying in their elementary schools. Each respondent was asked to answer a two part question: “Have you had training in each area listed and how important would additional training be in each area?” Respondents may or may not have answered all questions in this segment. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses, see Table 4.

Table 4

Principals’ Responses to Areas of Staff Training: Previous Training and Importance of Training

Items Related to Staff Training	Have Had Training				Importance of Training					
	Yes		No		Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Conducting class meetings as a strategy to prevent bullying.	117	61.3	74	38.7	101	67.8	45	30.2	3	2.0
Enlisting parent support in preventing bullying.	92	48.4	98	51.6	117	77.0	34	22.4	1	0.7
Enlisting staff support in preventing bullying.	143	74.5	49	25.5	128	89.5	14	9.8	1	0.7

Items Related to Staff Training	Have Had Training				Importance of Training					
	Yes		No		Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The counselor's role in preventing bullying.	163	84.9	29	15.1	128	90.1	12	8.5	2	1.4
Discipline practices for bullies.	116	61.7	72	38.3	120	83.3	23	16.0	1	0.7
Discipline practices for bystanders.	92	48.9	96	51.1	92	63.4	48	33.1	5	3.4
Locations where bullying is most likely to happen (hot spots)	133	70.4	56	29.6	107	75.4	28	19.7	7	4.9

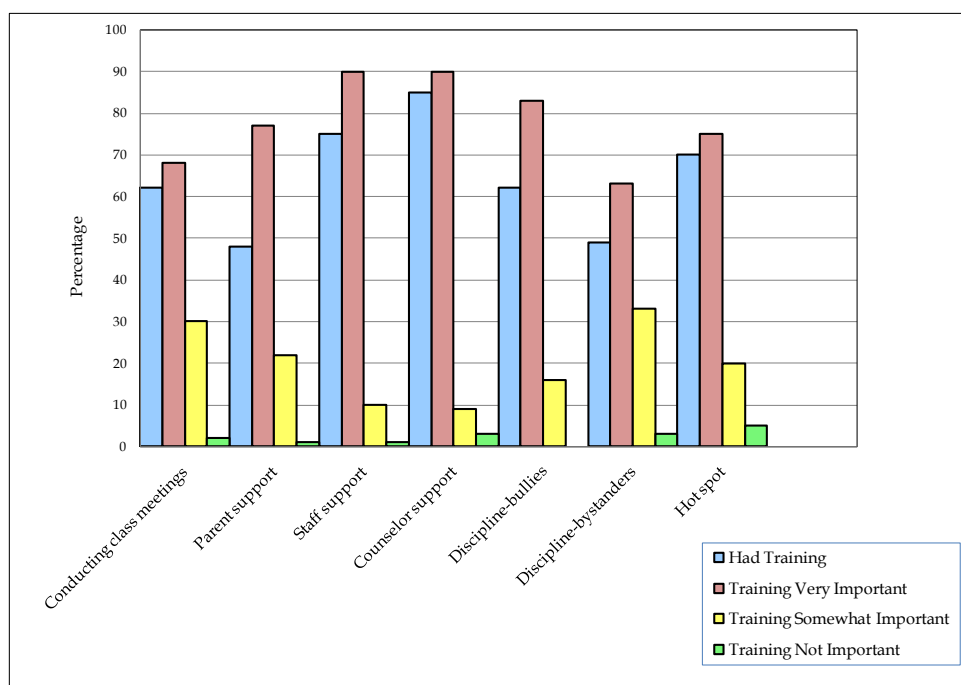


Figure 3. *Principals' Responses to Areas of Staff Training*

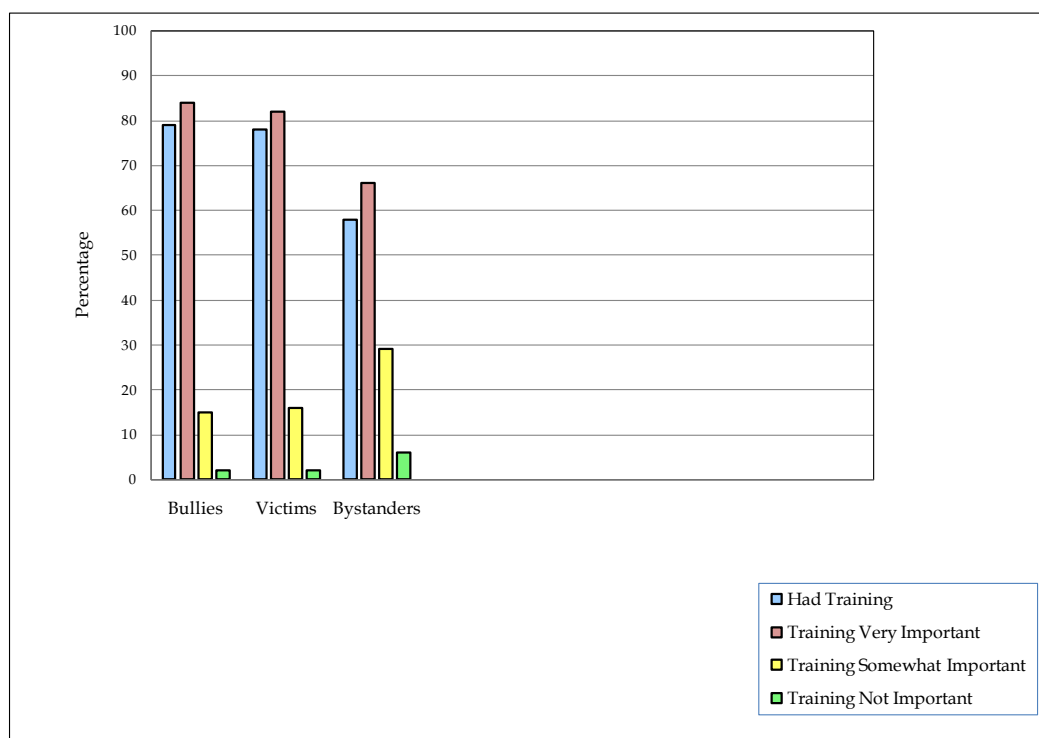
Groups Affected by Bullying

In the fourth group of survey questions, principals were asked to respond to topics about groups affected by bullying in their elementary schools. Each respondent was asked to answer a two part question: "Have you had training in each area listed," and "how important would additional training be in each area?" Respondents may or may not have answered all questions in this segment. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses, see Table 5.

Table 5

Principals' Responses to Groups Affected by Bullying

Items Related to Groups Affected by Bullying	Have Had Training				Importance of Training					
	Yes		No		Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Typical characteristic of bullies	149	78.8	40	21.2	112	83.6	20	14.9	2	1.5
Typical characteristics of victims of bullies	147	77.8	42	22.2	110	82.1	22	16.4	2	1.5
Typical characteristics of bystanders	110	58.2	79	41.8	92	65.7	40	28.6	8	5.7

Figure 4. *Principals' Responses to Groups Affected by Bullying*

Over half of all respondents reported that their staffs had some bullying training in each of the six areas related to administrators. The lowest percentage of respondents indicating staff training was “enlisting parent support in preventing bullying” (51.6%). This was followed by “designing a discipline practices for bystanders” (48.9%) and “conducting class meetings as a strategy to prevent bullying” (61.3%). The highest percentage of respondents indicating staff training was “the counselor’s role in preventing bullying” (84.9%), “enlisting staff support in

preventing bullying” (74.5%), and “locations where bullying is most likely to happen (hot spots)” (70.4%). The importance of staff training rated highest by principals was “the counselor’s role in preventing bullying” (90.1%). The next two areas rated high were “enlisting staff support” (89.5%) and “discipline practices for bullying” (83.3%). The area respondents reported that training was least important in the area of “discipline practices for bystanders” (36.5%).

Although 38.7% of respondents had not had training in “conducting class meetings as a strategy to prevent bullying,” only 2.0% of principals reported that training was not important. In training staff to “enlist parent support to prevent bullying,” 51.6% of principals had not had training, and 0.7% of principals surveyed reported training in this area was not important. For training in “enlisting staff support in preventing bullying,” 25.5% of the respondents have not had training, and 0.7% of principals surveyed indicated that training was not important in this area. Training in the “counselor’s role in preventing bullying” had not been received by 15.1% of respondents, and 1.4% of principals surveyed indicated the training in this area was not important for discipline practices for bullies, 38.3% of principals report that they had not received training in this area, and 0.7% of principals surveyed indicated this type of training was not important. Respondents reported that 51.1% had not been trained in discipline practices for bystanders, and 3.4% of principals surveyed indicated training in this area is not important. For the area of staff training to recognize locations where bullying is most likely to happen (hot spots),” 26.6% of the respondents reported they had not had training, and 4.9% of principals surveyed reported that training was not important in this area.

Over one-half of all respondents reported that they had some training in each of the three groups affected by bullying. The lowest percentage of respondents indicated that they had training was in the area of “typical characteristics of bystanders” (41.8%). The highest percentage of respondents indicated they had training was in “typical characteristics of bullies” (78.8%), followed by training in “typical characteristics of victims of bullies” (78.2%). The training area rated highest in importance by principals was “characteristics of bullies” (83.6%). The area respondents reported was least important (34.3%) was “characteristics of bystanders.”

Although 21.2% of respondents had not had training to “recognize typical characteristic of bullies,” only 1.5% of principals surveyed indicated the training was not important in this

area. In recognizing “typical characteristics of victims of bullies,” 22.2% of principals have not had training, and 1.5% of principals surveyed indicated training in this area is not important. Training to recognize “typical characteristics of bystanders” had not been received by 41.8% of respondents, and 5.7% of principals surveyed indicated the training in this area was not important.

Behaviors Associated with Bullying.

The fifth group of survey questions asked principals to respond to statements concerning behaviors associated with bullying in their elementary schools. Each respondent was asked to answer a two part question: “Have you had training in each area listed and how important would additional training be in each area?” Respondents may or may not have answered all questions in this segment. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses, see Table 6.

Table 6

Principals’ Responses to Behaviors Associated with Bullying by Areas of Training: Previous Training and Importance of Training

Items Related to Behaviors Related to Bullying	Have Had training				Importance of Training					
	Yes		No		Very Important	Somewhat Important		Not Important		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexual harassment as a form of bullying	134	70.5	56	29.5	109	79.0	28	20.3	1	0.7
Bullying of the Internet (Cyber bullying)	108	56.3	84	43.8	109	75.7	34	23.6	1	0.7
Exclusion as a bullying behavior	120	62.8	71	37.2	100	71.4	38	27.1	2	1.4
Types of physical bullying behaviors	155	81.6	35	18.4	106	80.3	24	18.2	2	1.5
Types of verbal bullying behaviors	152	80.0	38	20.0	105	79.5	25	18.9	2	1.5
Distinguishing actions that are bullying behaviors from actions that are not bullying behaviors	122	64.2	68	35.8	113	80.7	24	17.1	3	2.1

Over one-half of all respondents reported training in each of the six areas related to bullying behaviors. The lowest percentage of respondents indicated that they had training in “cyber bullying” (43.8%). This was followed by “exclusion” (37.3%) and “distinguishing actions

that are bullying behavior from actions that are not bullying behavior” (35.8%). Two-thirds to four-fifths of the respondents indicated that they had received training in the area of “physical bullying behaviors” (81.6%), “types of verbal bullying” (80.0%), and “sexual harassment” (70.5%). The training rated most important by principals was “distinguishing actions that are bullying behaviors from actions that are not bullying behaviors” (80.7%). This topic was followed by “physical bullying” (80.3%) and “verbal bullying” (79.5%). The area where respondents felt training was least important was “exclusion as a bullying behavior” (28.5%).

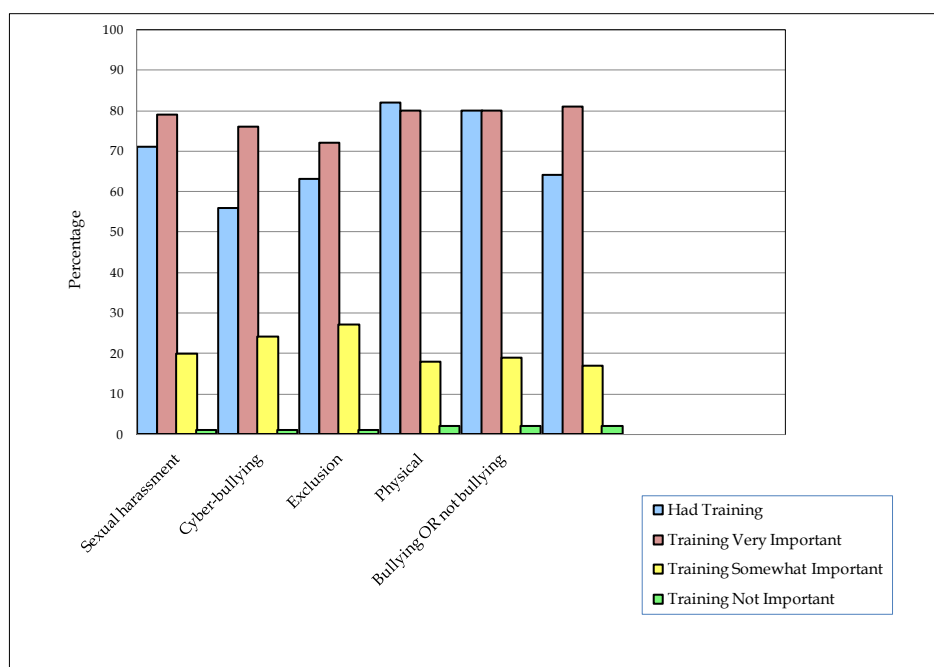


Figure 5. *Principals' Responses to Behaviors Associated with Bullying*

About one-third of the respondents had not had training to recognize “sexual harassment” as a form of bullying and 0.7% of principals surveyed indicated training in this area was not important. Regarding “bullying on the Internet (Cyber bullying),” 43.8% of the respondents had not had training, and only 0.7% of principals surveyed indicated that training in this area was not important. Training in “exclusion as a bullying behavior has not been received by 37.2% of respondents, and 1.4% of principals surveyed indicated the training in this area is not important. For types of “physical bullying behaviors,” 18.4% of principals report that they had not training in this area, and 1.5% of principals surveyed indicated this type of training was not important. Although 20.0% of respondents had not had training in types of verbal bullying behaviors, only 1.5% of principals surveyed indicated the training was not important. Respondents reported that

35.8% have not been trained in distinguishing actions that are bullying behaviors from actions that are not bullying behaviors, and 2.1% of principals surveyed indicated training in this area was not important.

Prevalence of Bullying

Bullying Behaviors.

Survey question six asked principals to indicate the frequency of bullying behaviors in their schools by grade levels. Respondents may or may not have answered all questions in this segment. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses, see Table 7 below.

Table 7

Principals' Responses to Frequency of Bullying by Grade Levels

Grade Level Bullying	Infrequent		Somewhat Frequent		Very Frequent		Not Applicable	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Kindergarten	157	83.1	17	9.0	3	1.6	12	6.3
First Grade	142	75.9	30	16.0	4	2.1	11	5.9
Second Grade	108	57.4	62	33.0	8	4.3	10	5.3
Third Grade	73	39.2	96	51.6	12	6.5	5	2.7
Fourth Grade	48	26.1	106	57.6	27	14.7	3	1.6
Fifth Grade	37	20.3	107	58.8	30	16.5	8	4.4
Sixth Grade	8	6.2	18	14.0	16	12.4	87	67.4

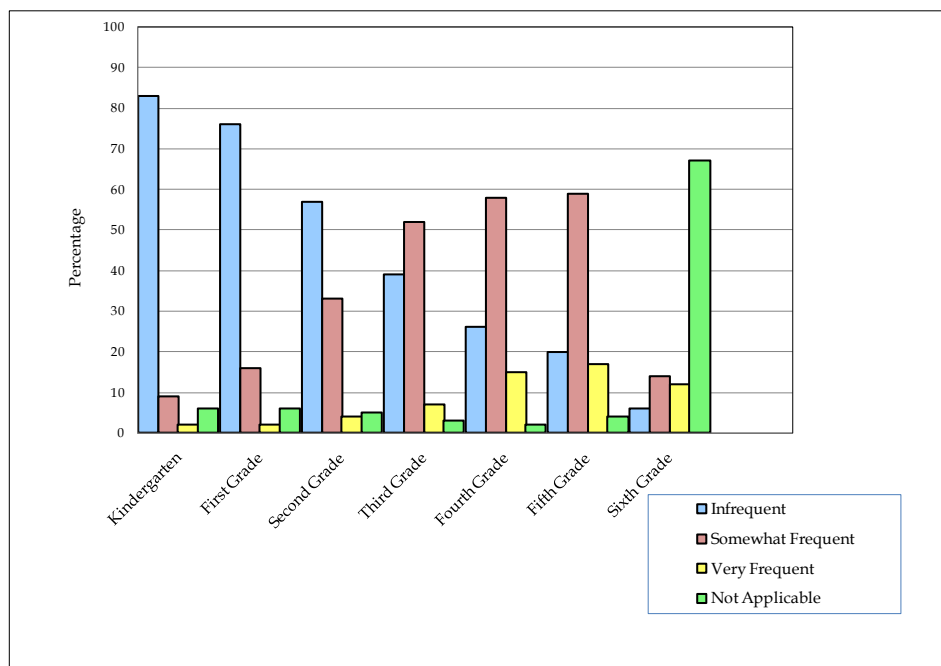


Figure 6. *Principals' Responses to Frequency of Bullying by Grade Level*

Respondents reported that bullying occurred most frequently in fifth grade (75.3%) followed by fourth grade (72.3%) and third grade at (58.1%). Second grade bullying was reported at (37.3%), first grade at (32.1%) and kindergarten at (18.6%). In many elementary schools in Virginia, sixth graders attend middle school, thus 67.4% of respondents surveyed indicated that sixth grade was not applicable. Of those schools with sixth grade students attending elementary school; a third of the respondents reported that bullying occurred frequently in sixth grade.

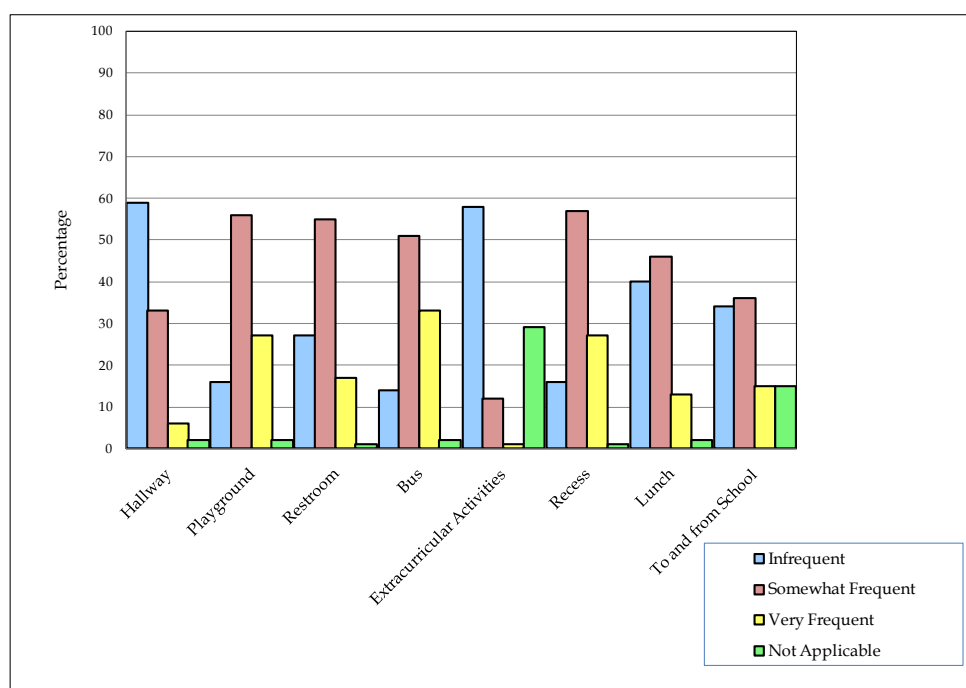
Bullying Behaviors by Location

Question seven asked principals to indicate the frequency of bullying behaviors in specific locations in and around their schools. Respondents may or may not have answered all questions in this segment. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses to question 7, see Table 8 below.

Table 8

Principals' Responses to Frequency of Bullying by Location

Items Related to Location of Bullying	Infrequent		Somewhat Frequent		Very Frequent		Not Applicable	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Hallway	110	59.1	61	32.8	11	5.9	4	2.2
Playground	30	15.8	106	55.8	51	26.8	3	1.6
Restroom	51	27.3	103	55.1	31	16.6	2	1.1
Bus	27	14.4	95	50.8	62	33.2	3	1.6
Extracurricular Activities	105	58.0	22	12.2	1	0.6	53	29.3
Recess	29	15.5	107	57.2	50	26.7	1	0.5
Lunch	75	39.7	86	45.5	24	12.7	4	2.1
To and from School	58	34.3	61	36.1	25	14.8	25	14.8

Figure 7. *Principals' Responses to Frequency of Bullying by Location*

Respondents reported that bullying occurred most frequently on the bus (84.0%), followed by recess (83.9%) playground (82.6%) restrooms (71.7%) lunch (58.2%), to and from school (50.9%) hallway (38.7%) and extracurricular activities at (12.8%).

Bullying Behaviors by Types

Question eight asked principals to indicate the frequency of specific types of bullying behaviors in and around their schools. Respondents may or may not have answered all questions in this segment. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses to question 8, see Table 9.

Table 9

Principals' Responses to Frequency of Types of Bullying

Items Related to Types of Bullying	Infrequent		Somewhat Frequent		Very Frequent		Not Applicable	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Teasing	30	15.8	111	58.4	49	25.8	0	0.0
Kicking	140	76.1	39	21.2	2	1.1	3	1.6
Name Calling	33	17.6	110	58.5	44	23.4	1	0.5
Isolation/Exclusion	80	42.3	87	46.0	20	10.6	2	1.1
Shunning	102	55.1	64	34.6	16	8.6	3	1.6
Sexual Harassment	161	87.5	12	6.5	0	0.0	11	6.0
Threatening	90	48.4	76	40.9	19	10.2	1	0.5
Hitting	111	60.0	64	34.6	10	5.4	0	0.0

Almost four-fifths of the respondents reported that the type of bullying behaviors occurring most frequently was teasing (84.2%), followed by name calling (81.9%), isolation/exclusion (56.6%), threatening (51.1%), shunning (43.2%), hitting (40.0%), kicking (22.3%), and sexual harassment (6.5%).

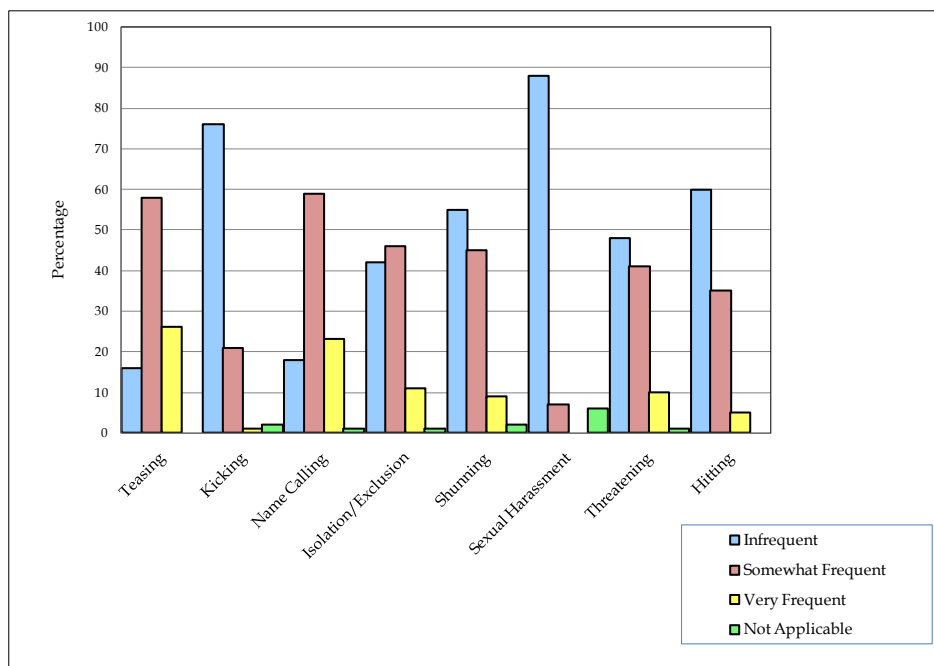


Figure 8. *Principals' Responses to Frequency of Types of Bullying*

Additional Training Topics

Question nine was an open-ended question that asked principals to suggest any other topics related to the principals' role in preventing bullying. Twenty-four principals reported other topics on which they wanted additional training. Results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Principals' Responses to Additional Training Topics

Items Related to Additional Training Topics	n	%
Selecting and implementing school wide bullying programs	13	54.2%
Supporting parents in bullying prevention	8	33.3%
Dealing with bystanders	2	8.3%
Dealing with victims of bullying	1	4.2%
Total number of responses	24	100.0%

About half of the respondents who answered the open-ended question wanted training on how to support parents in preventing bullying. Two principals requested additional information

on bystanders' behaviors. One principal requested additional information on working with victims of bullying.

Characteristics of Respondents

Principals' Hours of Training

Question ten asked principals to report the number of clock hours of training each had in preventing bullying. Respondents may or may not have answered this question. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses to question 10, see Table 11 below.

Table 11

Principals' Clock Hours of Training

Clock Hours of Training in Preventing Bullying	n	%
None	12	6.3%
1-5	71	37.2%
6-10	57	29.8%
11-15	22	11.5%
More than 15	29	15.2%
Total number of responses	191	100.0%

About three-quarters of the respondents received 10 hours or less of training. Only 15.2% of respondents reported they received more than 15 hours of training, 37% of the respondents reported they had 1-5 hours of training, and 11.5% reported they received 11-15 hours of training (Figure 9).

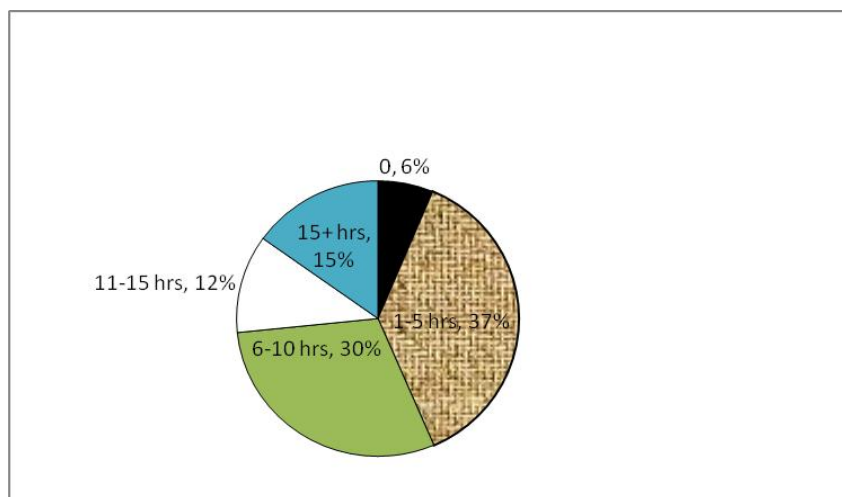


Figure 9. *Clock Hours of Principals' Training in Bullying Prevention*

Principal's Years of Service in Current Building

Question 11 asked each principal to report how long he or she had been principal in the current building. Respondents may or may not have answered this question. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses to question 11, see 12 below.

Table 12

Principals' Years of Service in Current Building

Years Served in Current Building	n	%
0-5	89	46.4%
6-10	49	25.5%
11-15	25	13.0%
More than 15	29	15.1%
Total number of responses	192	

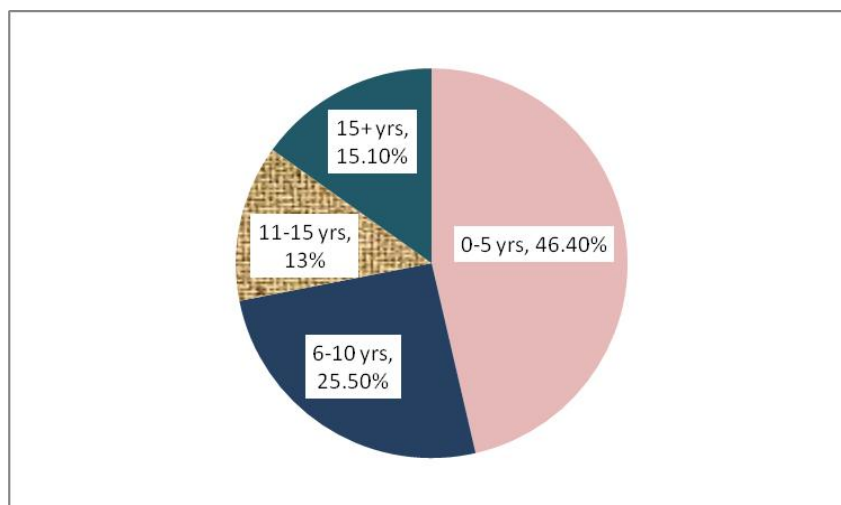


Figure 10. *Total Years of Experience in Current Building*

Almost one-half of the principals surveyed reported they had served 5 years or less in their current building, a quarter of the principals surveyed had served 6-10 years of service, followed by more than 15 years of service (15.1%) and 11-15 years of service (13.0%) (Figure 10).

Principals' Total Years of Service

Survey question 12 asked respondents to report total years of experience. Respondents may or may not have answered this question. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses to question 12, see Table 13 below.

Table 13

Principals' Total Years of Service

Principals' Total Years of Service	n	%
0-5	87	45.1%
6-10	52	26.9%
11-15	21	10.9%
More than 15	33	17.1%
Total number of responses	193	100.0%

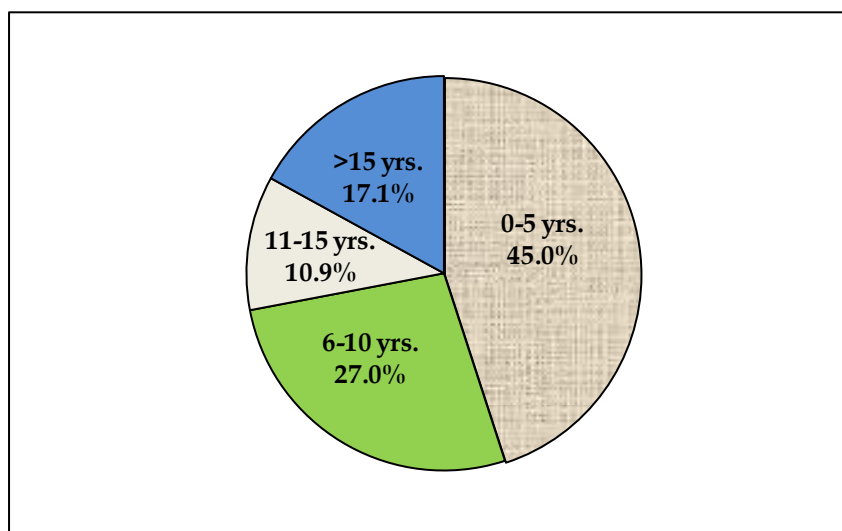


Figure 11. *Principals' Total Years of Service*

Almost one-half of the principals surveyed reported they had served 5 years or less, a quarter of the principals surveyed had served 6-10 years of service, followed by more than 15 years of service (17.1%), and 11-15 years of service (10.9%).

Total Student Membership

Survey question 13 asked each respondent to report the total student membership in his or her building. Respondents may or may not have answered this question. The survey was designed to allow partial answers to be reported and counted for data purposes. For a summary of responses to question 13, see Table 14 below.

Table 14

Total Student Membership

Total Student Membership	n	%
Less than 400	60	31.0%
401-600	79	41.0%
601-800	38	19.7%
801-1000	9	4.7%
More than 1000	7	3.6%
Total number of responses	193	

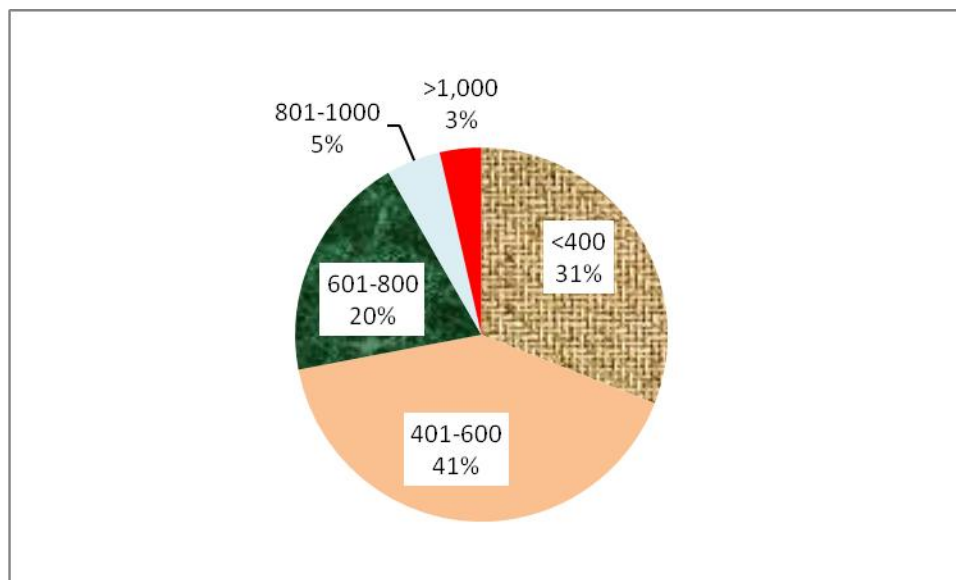


Figure 12. *Student Membership of Respondents' Schools*

Almost one-half of the principals surveyed reported their total student membership was between 401 – 600 children, followed by a third who reported total student membership of less than 400. Almost 20% of principals surveyed reported that between 601-800 children attended their schools and a few principals reported total membership of more than 1,000 students.

Summary of Survey Responses

Principals were asked to respond to questions pertaining to what training they had to understand the definition of bullying, and the prevalence of bullying by grade level and location. Principals were also asked to respond to what training they need to understand the definition of bullying and prevalence of bullying by grade level and location. Principals' responses to administrative training, staff training, groups affected by bullying, and behaviors associated with bullying revealed that principals had some training in these areas but indicated that training in these areas is important in order to understand bullying.

The χ^2 statistic was calculated to determine if any of the responses regarding prior training and the importance of the different topics were significantly related to the responses regarding the definition of bullying. There was no statistically significant difference between principals' choice of definition and responses to training and training needs.

Principals reported that bullying occurred most often in fifth grade while children were riding the bus to and from school. Less than 20% of respondents reported that they have received more than 15 hours of training in preventing bullying; most principals surveyed had 10 hours of training or less. Almost half of the Virginia elementary school principals surveyed reported they have served 5 years or less in their current building and 5 years or less in the role of principal. The average elementary school in Virginia has between 400 and 600 children, followed by schools with a total student membership of less than 400.

In Chapter Four, procedures, collection of data, and findings were reported. In Chapter Five conclusions, findings and implications for further studies will be reported.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter includes a summary of findings, the researcher's interpretation and explanation of the findings, and a discussion of the implications of this study. The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, a summary of the purpose and methodology of the study is presented. In the second section, conclusions reached for each of the two research questions are summarized. In the last section, the researcher will expand on the data generated, provide possible implications and uses of this data, and present suggestions to future researchers and others interested in the topic of principals' perceptions of bullying.

Summary of the Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to provide a more in-depth understanding of elementary school principals' perceptions of bullying, how they define bullying, how prevalent they think bullying is in their schools, and what their training needs are. Despite the extensive literature about bullying among children, there is a gap in the literature regarding school administrator and teacher preparation for handling challenges involving bullying behaviors. Principals play a key role in preventing and intervening with bullying at school (Rigby, 1996, Sturdy, 1999), yet they receive little, if any, help or training in effectively dealing with such problems.

The survey was conducted using an on-line instrument constructed on SurveyMonkey, a web-based survey maker. At the close of the survey, 195 principals had responded, yielding a return rate of 80.2%. Descriptive statistics using SurveyMonkey results and JMP software (2005) were calculated to report categorical information about principals' perceptions of bullying, the training they received, and their perceptions of the importance of specific training needs.

Principals' Definitions of Bullying

The first research question focuses on principals' definitions of bullying. Respondents were given three definitions and asked to select the one that was closest to their own. Over two-thirds (71.4%) of the respondents selected the definition associated with Olweus (1999), which is: *Bullying is any words or actions that harm or threaten another person's body, property, self esteem, or group acceptance, including oral, written, electronic, nonverbal forms of ridicule or intimidation.* The

other two definitions, selected from school district policies, were selected by the remaining respondents (28.6%). These findings suggest that principals find the definition associated with Olweus, which is more inclusive, closer to their own definition of bullying. Staff development programs and school districts might consider using this definition rather than develop their own, less inclusive ones.

Training

Training Topics – Previous Training and the Importance of Training

Principals were asked to respond to a number of training topics related to bullying. The topics were grouped into *Administrative*, *Staff Training*, *Affected Groups*, and *Behaviors Associated with Bullying*. For each topic, principals indicated whether they had training in that area, and then indicated the level of importance they assigned to each topic.

Administrative.

While over one-half of the principals indicated that they had training in each of the administrative topic areas, *the role of central office*, *designing a school-wide prevention program*, and *implementing a school wide program*, were selected by the fewest principals. Over 80% of the principals rated *helping classroom teachers address bullying*, *developing a climate for safety*, and *training staff in bullying prevention* as very important. It is interesting to note that the topics principals considered as most important areas in which they needed training were not among those where the fewest principals had training.

In all but one area, the findings for the administrative topics support the research as described in Rigby and Slee (1999), Olweus (1999), and Harris, Petrie and Willoughby (2002). Unever and Cornell (2003) state that the central office plays a crucial role in the implementation of a bullying-prevention program in school divisions. While slightly over one-half of the principals said they had training in central office support for bully prevention programs, only 57% of principals considered training in this area very important. This phenomenon may be due to a lack of an integrated, division-wide program in many districts.

Staff Training in the Prevention of Bullying

Somewhat fewer principals indicated that they had training in topics related to staff engagement. Slightly fewer than one-half of the respondents indicated that they had bully prevention training in “Parent support”, and “Discipline practices for bystanders.” The area most cited was the item, “The counselor’s role in preventing bullying.”

About 90% of the principals rated enlisting staff support and the counselor’s role as very important. On the other hand, only two-thirds of the principals indicated it was very important to be trained in “Class meetings as a strategy to prevent bullying”, and “Discipline practices for bystanders,”

While about two-thirds of the respondents rated class meetings as a strategy to use in bully prevention as very important, only about two-thirds of the respondents had any training in the topic. Principals who have had training in conducting class meetings may see them as more important. The topics, for which the highest percentage of respondents had training, “enlisting staff support” and “the counselor’s role”, were also those topics perceived as very important by the largest percentage of principals. Less than one-half of the respondents had training in disciplinary practices for bystanders and this topic was also rated lowest in importance.

Olweus (1993) and Hazler (1996) cite class meetings as an effective strategy in preventing bullying. Relatively few principals had training in this topic and considered it very important. Olweus (1999) and Harris and Petrie (2002) stated that an important strategy is to establish disciplinary practices for bystanders in bullying incidents. Fewer than one-half of the principals had training in this topic and less than two-thirds thought it was very important. This may be the result of a lack of familiarity with the concept of disciplinary practices for bystanders. While principals thought that parent support in combating bullying, as recommended by Olweus (2001), was very important, fewer than one-half of the respondents had training in the topic. Three-quarters of the principals indicated that they had training to recognize hot spots for bullying activity. Rigby and Slee (1993) emphasized that a key to bully prevention is recognizing hot spots of bullying activity and 95% of principals surveyed indicated that recognizing hot spots for bullying is very important.

Results from the Staff Training section of the survey suggest that principals' perceptions are that anti-bullying programs should include class meetings, parent support, and disciplinary practices for bystanders as well as the other topics

Groups Affected by Bullying

While over three-quarters of the principals indicated that they had training in recognizing the typical characteristics of both bullies and their victims typical characteristics of victims of bullies, only one-half of the principals had training in recognizing typical characteristics of the bystander. This data supports the research of Harris (2002), who emphasized the importance of understanding the role of each of these groups in her book, *Bullies, Victims and Bystanders*. It is interesting to note that most principals (94%) reported that training in understanding the characteristics of these three groups as very important.

Behaviors Associated with Bullying

While three-quarters of the principals indicated that they had training in several behaviors associated with bullying ("Types of physical bullying," "Types of verbal bullying," and "Sexual harassment as a form of bullying") only about one-half of those surveyed indicated they had training in the following three related topics: "Cyberbullying," "Exclusion," and "Distinguishing actions that are bullying behaviors from those actions that are not considered bullying behaviors." Over 90% of principals indicated that training is very important in all of the areas enumerated on the survey.

In all areas regarding behaviors associated with bullying, the findings support the research as described in Olweus (1993), Rigby and Slee (1999), Thomsen (2002) and Weinhold (2003). Weinhold (2003) stated that the lack of knowledge in recognizing bullying behaviors occurs when educators ignore bullying incidences and treat them as minor problems.

Conclusions

Principals need more training to identify and deal with bullying in their school buildings. Since prolonged acts of bullying can have devastating effects on a child's life (Olweus, 1999), it is vital that elementary school principals take an active role in sharing a clear and concise definition of bullying. They need to know the kinds of bullying children are experiencing and

where bullying is taking place. Principals must also commit to attend training and provide training for their staffs and school communities.

Findings

Findings interpreted from the results of the research included principals' definitions of bullying, what training principals have and what training principals report they need, the location of bullying in their buildings, the prevalence of bullying across grade levels, and the amount of time principals spent in training on the topic of bullying.

Definitions

Regardless of each principal's chosen definition of bullying, they reported similar answers to questions on training received and training needed. In the article, *Shaping Safer Schools: A Bully Prevention Action Plan* (Safe Schools, 2005), school boards were urged to have a bullying prevention policy that included a clear definition of bullying. Current literature, however, does not provide one universally-accepted definition of bullying.

Principal's Training

Principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia have attended training on a variety of topics pertaining to bullying prevention. While most principals reported they had little training in these areas, eight out of ten principals reported that training in all the areas discussed here was important.

Prevalence of Bullying

Researchers including Olweus (1993), Byrne (1999) and Vettenburg (1999), found that bullying is most prevalent in grades three and four. Additionally, Rigby and Slee (1999) reported that incidences of bullying in boys and girls decreased after age eight until age eighteen. Olweus (1999) reported that children are most likely to be bullied in second grade and the chance of being bullied decreases each year thereafter. Survey results indicated that principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia believe bullying is most prevalent at the fifth grade level.

Location of Bullying

Mellor (1999) reported that about one-half of the children surveyed indicated that the most common place for bullying to occur was on the playground and one-quarter reported that the classroom was a common place for bullying to occur. Most principals surveyed reported that bullying is most common on playgrounds in Virginia elementary schools, followed by incidences on the bus and at recess.

By observing bullying in the classroom, Atlas and Pepler (1998) reported that verbal aggression (name-calling) was observed in one-half of the reported cases, and physical aggression (hitting and kicking) was observed one-third of the time. Bullying, occurring in the form of name-calling and teasing, is especially prominent among pre-adolescent girls (Alasker & Brunner, 1999; Vail, 2002; Wiseman, 2002). Survey results indicated that Virginia elementary school principals reported that teasing is the most common form of bullying. This was followed by name calling, isolation, and threatening.

Amount of Training Received

While current research does not clearly report the number of training hours needed, a comprehensive training program would require multiple days of staff development. To successfully prevent bullying in elementary schools, principals must create a school environment that is characterized by caring, positive interests, involvement of staff and parents, and firm limits regarding unacceptable behaviors (Olweus, 1993). Involving staff, students, community members, and local school boards are vital pieces of any prevention program. About three-quarters of all principals surveyed in Virginia have had ten training hours or less in bullying, which correlates to training for one or one-and-a-half days.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study consisted of a review of current literature and the analysis of survey responses from 195 of the 485 public elementary school principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Principals provided their perceptions on bullying by definition, training needs, prevalence, and location. From the findings of this study, recommendations for future research include the following:

1. Replication of this study by conducting research comparing regions of Virginia or regions of the United States. Surveying principals by geographic locations could ensure a controlled number of responses from each area. In the sample reported, no demographics were collected, thus there is a possibility that some school districts were overly represented and/or some school districts were not represented.
2. Replication of this study by conducting interviews and school observations. Personal interviews would allow principals to report their definition of bullying and provide specific feedback on what types of training they either received or want to receive. By observing, the researcher could gather data on the focus of bully prevention in each school. In the sample reported, few opportunities for the respondents to share specific information were provided. There were no opportunities for respondents to provide input on the focus of bullying in their schools and school districts.
3. Replication of this study by surveying assistant principals, guidance counselors, faculty and staff and /or survey parents, and students about their perceptions of bullying. Comparisons could be made between the principals' perceptions and the perceptions of the other parties. In order to have an effective bully-prevention program, all parties must have a common focus. In the sample reported, only one party in a school was surveyed. This may not be an accurate assessment of the actual situation in each elementary school building.
4. Replication of the study by comparing schools with an established bully prevention program with schools without an established bully prevention program. In this sample reported, no specific data was provided to determine which respondents had established bully prevention programs in their schools. Principals disagreed with what research says about the prevalence of bullying in elementary schools. This survey does not provide an answer to why this happened.

In conclusion, future research including bully prevention program information and geographic information may provide a more representative sampling of elementary school principals' perception of bullying in the Commonwealth of Virginia. By providing principals with an opportunity to answer additional open-ended questions or respond directly to an interviewer, more specific data on the school's focus would be collected.

By surveying school personnel, families' and students' perceptions on dealing with bullying in elementary schools, a more comprehensive understanding of what training is needed would be provided. Data on the prevalence of bullying and the locations where bullying occurs were collected and analyzed.

Implications

Implications for practice suggested that schools and school districts who desire to support principals with training on bullying prevention should consider staff development that will provide training to all members of the elementary school community. A school-wide bullying prevention program would include a comprehensive training package that addresses the needs of the principal and administrative staff, guidance counselors, teachers and support staff, community members, parents, and students.

It is clear in the research that principals play a key role in preventing and intervening with bullying at school (Rigby, 1996, Sturdy, 1999). In order for principals to fulfill this role they must be open to examining the actions of their students on each grade level. Principals must be trained to recognize subtle acts of bullying so they can set the tone for the bullying prevention program in their schools.

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Principals must deliver a clear message regarding their expectations of student behavior in all communication with staff, families, students and the school community. This message should be supported by the principal's commitment to create an environment that is bully-free. By formulating a set of rules that govern student behavior, by adjusting schedules to provide coverage to areas that are known hotspots for bullying, by consistently adhering to discipline plans, and by providing necessary resources to staff members, a bully free-environment will be created.

Elementary school principals must recognize the role of the guidance counselor as an integral part to the success of the bullying program. Ensuring that guidance counselors have the necessary resources to create the link between home and school, avenues will be opened for families and staff to address bully prevention. Commitment of faculty and staff ensures that the school-wide climate is a priority in the school building. Teachers, assistants, office support, cafeteria staff, bus drivers, crossing guards, and after school care workers must be a part of the initiative. Resources for all to understand the bully prevention system must be provided by the principal.

Parents and community members are vital parts of a bully prevention program. Their role in the success of the program is to reinforce the expectations of the school-wide initiative. Principals must also provide training and resources to this group. Student input in the bully prevention program is crucial as well. Principals must cultivate a sense of ownership on the part of students to prevent bullying.

By recognizing and rewarding children, faculty, staff, and community members when their actions support the expectations of the bully prevention program, principals ensure the effectiveness of the program. In conclusion, it is crucial to train school personnel, families and students to deal with bullying in elementary schools.

Reflections

This researcher is indebted to the 195 principals who took time during their busy day to report their understandings and assumptions about bullying training in elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It was surprising that many principals reported they received 10 hours or less of training to prevent bullying. This minimal amount of training suggests that no formal bully prevention training has been provided for that principal or his or her school. In this researcher's school district, it a high priority to have an intensive and on-going staff development program in bullying prevention. this researcher had assumed more school districts in Virginia had made the same commitment.

Until public school systems in the Commonwealth of Virginia make it a priority to provide comprehensive bully prevention training, beginning at the elementary school level, the problem of bullying will not be resolved. Elementary principals must embrace the need for bully

prevention training to ensure their staffs, families, communities and students commit to bully prevention. Principals surveyed made assumptions based on what they feel or think concerning whom in their schools are being bullied. Research showed that principals are not accurate with respect to who is being bullied, who is a victim and who is a bystander. A bully prevention training program will allow the school community to gather accurate data from students, families, and staff concerning problems with bullying behaviors. Principals must create a school environment that is characterized by caring, positive interests and involvement of staff and parents, and firm limits to unacceptable behaviors (Olweus, 1993) to successfully prevent bullying in elementary schools. Safe schools are invariably led by principals who foster an atmosphere based on principles of belonging and caring among students, faculty, and parents (Harris & Petrie, 2003).

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Appendix A Harris Survey

SURVEY QUESTIONS ON BULLYING

1. Do you personally try to stop bullying when you see it happening?
2. Do you think that school personnel at your school are interested in trying to stop bullying?
3. Do you think your school is safe for students who find it hard to defend themselves from bullying from other students?
4. Do you feel you discuss the issue of bullying at school with any class or students?
5. Do you feel students inform you that they have been bullied while at school?
6. Do you feel it is hard for students to defend themselves from bullying from other students?
7. Do you feel stopping bullying is important to all staff?
8. Do you think more training is needed to deal with bullying?
9. Do you think a school policy should be developed to address bullying?
10. Do you feel everyone in the building should be responsible for addressing bullying?
11. Do you feel students who bully are disciplined?
12. Do you feel students who bully should first be counseled?
13. Do you think more rigorous monitoring by staff of bullying is needed?
14. Do you think teachers should discuss bullying with their class?
15. Do you think a suggestion box should be used to reduce bullying at your school?
16. Do you feel students are teased at your school?
17. Do you feel spreading rumors at school is a form of bullying?
18. Do you feel boys bully more than girls?
19. Do you feel girls bully more than boys?
20. Do you think bullying is a problem in your building?

Appendix B Permission to Use the Survey

Dr. Sandy Harris
Professor of Education
Stephen F. Austin State University
Nacogdoches, Texas 75962

Dear Dr. Harris,

I am asking for permission to use your survey entitled Bullying Survey (Teacher/Administrator). The purpose of this study is look at what training have Virginia elementary school principals received and what training do principals' need to understand the definition of bullying and the prevalence of bullying by grade level and location?

Sincerely,

Anthony W. Leonard

Tony

Well, that makes my day. I'm glad I could help. I look forward to receiving a copy of your work. Best of luck - if I can help further let me know.

Sandy Harris

Tony Leonard <leonaraw@pwcs.edu> wrote:

Thank you for the quick reply. Your survey is exactly what I was looking for and I am grateful for your help. I will revise the survey to fit into the categories about which I am collecting data.

When I have finished my dissertation, I will send you a copy of my work in hopes that you can help someone else as much as you have helped me.

Thank you once again, have a blessed day.

Tony

Tony Leonard
Principal, Kerrydale Elementary School
13199 Kerrydale Road
Woodbridge, VA 22193
703-590-1262
fax, 703-670-6259

Appendix C Leonard Bullying Survey

One Page Bullying Survey

1. Listed below are three definitions of bullying that have been used in the research literature.

Please indicate which one is closest to the definition that you would use in your school.

Bullying is unwarranted attention demonstrating an imbalance of power. The actions happen repetitively, over time.

Bullying is physical and/ or verbal aggression toward others.

Bullying is any words or actions that harm or threaten another person's body, property, self esteem, or group acceptance; including oral, written, electronic, nonverbal forms of ridicule or intimidation.

2. Listed below are topics included in administrative training for the prevention of bullying in schools. For each statement, please indicate whether you have had training in that area by checking YES or NO. If you need training or need additional training by checking how important the training would be for you.

	Had Training	Training In This Area Is...
The principal's role in preventing bullying	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Training staff in bullying	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

prevention

Developing school

policies to prevent

bullying

The role of central

office in

supporting

bullying

prevention

Developing a

climate for safety

in the school

building.

Helping teachers

address bullying in

their classrooms

Designing a school

wide bullying

prevention

program

Implementing a

school wide

bullying

prevention

program

3. Listed below are topics included in training for your staff in the prevention of bullying in schools. For each statement, please indicate whether you have had training in that area by checking YES or NO. If you need training or need additional training by checking how important the training would be for you.

	Had Training	Training In This Area Is...
Conducting class meetings as a strategy to prevent bullying.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Enlisting parent support in preventing bullying	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Enlisting staff support in preventing bullying	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
The counselors role in bullying prevention	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Discipline practices for bullies	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Discipline practices for bystanders	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Locations where bullying is most likely to happen (hot spots)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

4. Listed below are groups affected by bullying in schools. For each statement, please indicate whether you have had training in that area by checking YES or NO. If you need training or need additional training by checking how important the training would be for you.

	Had Training	Training In This Area Is...
Typical characteristics of bullies	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Typical characteristics of victims of bullies	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Typical characteristics of	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

bystanders

5. Listed below are behaviors associated with bullying in schools. For each statement, please indicate whether you have had training in that area by checking YES or NO. If you need training or need additional training by checking how important the training would be for you.

	Had Training	Training In This Area Is...
Sexual harassment as a form of bullying	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Bullying on the Internet (Cyberbullying)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Exclusion as a bullying behavior	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Types of physical bullying behaviors	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Types of verbal bullying behaviors	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Distinguishing actions that are bullying behavior from actions that are not bullying	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

behavior

6. For each grade level listed below, indicate the frequency of bullying behaviors in your school.

	Infrequent	Somewhat Frequently	Very Frequently	Not Applicable
Kindergarten				
First Grade				
Second Grade				
Third Grade				
Fourth Grade				
Fifth Grade				
Sixth Grade				

7. For the locations listed below, indicate the frequency of bullying behaviors in your school.

	Infrequent	Somewhat Frequently	Very Frequently	Not Applicable
Hallway				
Playground				
Restroom				
Bus				
Extracurricular				

Activities

Recess

Lunch

To and From

School

Other (please specify)

8. For the types listed below, indicate the frequency of bullying behaviors in your school.

	Infrequent	Somewhat Frequently	Very Frequently	Not Applicable
--	------------	------------------------	--------------------	----------------

Teasing

Kicking

Name Calling

Isolation/Exclusion

Shunning

Sexual Harassment

Threatening

Hitting

9. Please suggest any other topics related to the principal's role in preventing bullying in which

you would like to have training.



10. How many clock hours of training have you had in preventing bullying in your school?

None

1-5 Hours

6-10 Hours

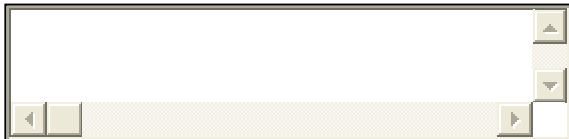
11-15 Hours

More than 15 Hours

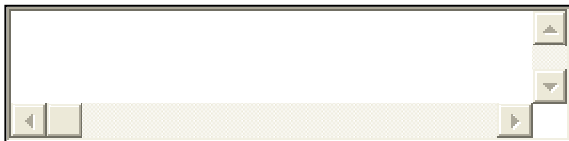
11. How many years have you been an elementary school principal in your current building?



12. How many total years have you been a principal?



13. What is the total student membership in your school building?



Appendix D Request for Permission to Survey



Prince William County

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Providing A World-Class Education

November 1, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my request. Should you have any questions or desire additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I am a May 2008 candidate for a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and wish to conduct a study which will survey elementary school principals in your school division. To complete the study, I am requesting permission from your school division to randomly survey elementary school principals. Participants will be randomly selected from the list of Virginia Public Elementary School Principals on the Virginia Department of Education web site. There is no identifying information on the survey and all responses will be confidential. I have received approval to complete this survey by the Internal Review Board of Virginia Tech and have attached a copy of the Virginia Tech IRB.

My dissertation is titled: An Analysis of Elementary Principals' Perceptions of Bullying in Virginia Public Schools: Definition, Prevalence and Training Needs. The survey will take principals 10 – 15 minutes to complete.

Anthony W, Leonard,
Doctoral Candidate

Principal, Kerrydale Elementary School
13199 Kerrydale Road
Woodbridge, VA 22193
Phone: 703.590.1262
Fax: 703.670.6259
leonaraw@pwcs.edu

Appendix E Invitation to Complete Survey

December 15, 2007

Greetings,

I am a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University conducting a research study regarding elementary school principals' perceptions of bullying. The title of my study is "Bullying in Virginia Elementary Schools: Principals' Perceptions of Training Needs, Prevention Programs, and Prevalence. Data collected from this survey will add to the body of literature on the principal's role in bully prevention.

You have been randomly selected to complete the survey, and your participation is completely voluntary. The survey is Web-based and will take about 15 minutes or less to complete.

There are minimal risks associated with this survey. Your responses will be confidential. Data will be reported in a doctoral dissertation and may be used in aggregated form in presentations and publications. Demographic information will be used only for analysis purposes, and any identifiers will be destroyed upon approval of the dissertation.

Early next week, you will receive an email from me with the link to the survey. The survey will be available through January 15, 2008. If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact me via email at leonaraw@pwcs.edu.

I truly appreciate your time, and I value your opinions.

Sincerely,
Anthony W. Leonard, Doctoral Student
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Appendix F Second Invitation to Complete Survey

One Page Survey on Bullying:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=hhIXIUfXFyLsOEkXPprGXQ_3d_3d

Dear Colleague:

Thank you taking time to complete the survey on Principals' Perceptions of Bullying in Virginia elementary schools. Response has been overwhelming. I will begin analyzing your opinions and training needs this month.

If you have not had the chance to complete the survey, I would appreciate your input. My dissertation is titled: An Analysis of Virginia Elementary School Principals' Perceptions of Bullying: Definition, Prevalence, and Training Needs. Surveys can be completed through a web based program at

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=hhIXIUfXFyLsOEkXPprGXQ_3d_3d

There is no identifying information on the survey and your responses will be confidential. Double click on either address above, the survey is self explanatory. When you have answered the questions, click DONE to submit your survey. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 703-590-1262 or e-mail me at leonaraw@pwcs.edu

As I look forward to a May 2008, graduation Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, I am deeply indebted to you for finding the time to assist me in conducting this research.

Gratefully,

Tony Leonard, Doctorate Candidate

Principal, Kerrydale Elementary School
13199 Kerrydale Road
Woodbridge, VA 22193
703-590-1262
fax, 703-670-6259
leonaraw@pwcs.edu

Appendix G IRB Approval

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action Institution

Invent the Future

Office of Research Compliance

Institutional Review Board
 1880 Pratt Drive (0497)
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
 540/231-4991 Fax: 540/231-0959
 E-mail: moored@vt.edu
 www.irb.vt.edu

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY AND STATE UNIVERSITY

cc: File

DATE: November 8, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: John Eller

Anthony Leonard

FROM: David M. Moore

IRB Exempt Approval: "Bullying in Virginia Elementary Schools: Principal's

Perceptions of Training Needs, Prevention Programs, and Prevalence", IRB # 07-541

I have reviewed your request to the IRB for exemption for the above referenced project. I concur that the research falls within the exempt status. Approval is granted effective as of November 8, 2007.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

SUBJECT:

FWA00000572(expires 1/20/2010)

IRB # is IRB00000667

Office of Research Compliance

Institutional Review Board
 2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
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 540/231-4991 Fax 540/231-0959
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