

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON BULLYING AND STUDENT
BEHAVIORS

by

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CERTIFICATION OF PROJECT WORK

We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON BULLYING AND STUDENT BEHAVIORS by Kristin L. Corsaro, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, Curriculum Instruction, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.



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Abstract

Parental involvement has proven to play a large role in student academic achievement. With bullying becoming a widespread problem in school districts across the nation, one has to wonder if parental involvement also plays a role in student behaviors. Most experts agree that students with disabilities are bullied at a higher rate than their general education peers and that these types of behaviors are happening frequently. This study looks at the opinions of parents on what the true definition of bullying is, as well as examines student behaviors both in the classroom as well as during areas of transition or in specialty classes. The role in which parents play in their child's lives may not only be affecting their academics, but their behaviors and involvement in bullying instances as well. School districts are beginning to recognize the problem and are looking to "whole school approaches" to educate all students and faculty on how to react in bullying situations in hopes to lessen the instances. By involving parents and making them aware that their involvement could play a role could also lessen the amount of bullying within their child's classroom.

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Introduction

Bullying has become a huge area of concern over the last several years and most people have seen or experienced bullying at some point in their lives. Garcia Briggs, Simpson, and Gaus (2010) report that in a study conducted with 16,000 sixth through tenth grade students that approximately 30 percent reported moderate or frequent involvement with bullying. Now years later and with national and international tragedies, increased media attention, and state and federal legislative agendas bullying is a wide spread research area (Rose & Espelage, 2012). There is also research stating that students with disabilities are more frequently victims of bullying compared to students without disabilities. There are emerging data indicating that students with certain disabilities are more likely to be victimized and that rates of occurrence are higher in integrated settings than in special education settings (Maag & Katsiyannis, 2012). This topic is important to the field of education because it affects all students and often times when students are being bullied it can affect their academics as well as relationships with peers. It has been suggested that victimization can hinder a student's capacity to learn in the school environment and it can interfere with students with disabilities receiving the education that is critical to their success (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). One study indicates that in the year 2008, approximately 1.2 million students were victims of nonfatal crimes at school and that 32% of 12 to 18 year-old students reported having been bullied at school during the academic school year (Maag & Katsiyannis, 2012). Since these studies were completed data has been emerging that students with disabilities are in fact typical victims of bullying especially when compared to their non-disabled peers. There is also research that supports family backgrounds playing a significant role in successful outcomes for all students both academically and socially. Hindin (2010) states that the role of family in a child's education is unquestionable and that parental involvement

affects students in their academics, motivation to learn, behaviors, as well as their outlook to the future. There are many factors that may contribute to bullying situations, however the way a child is raised is one factor that should also be more closely examined.

Review of the Literature

Review of the literature indicated that bullying is becoming a large problem in school districts across the nation. Although, schools are making an effort to tackle the problem by using various anti-bullying approaches, it is a wonder as to whether or not the involvement of parents and families makes a difference in student behaviors. Research has shown that students with disabilities tend to be victimized more often than their general education peers, however it is also shown that students with disabilities keep quiet about bullying instances and their involvement, therefore making it difficult to be amended. Rose et al. found that based on 32 articles reviewed, several studies involving students with disabilities reported victimization rates in excess of 50%. Through student and teacher interviews, the researchers also determined that 55% of students with mild learning difficulties and 78% of students with moderate learning disabilities experienced moderate to severe levels of victimization. School districts are using various approaches to educate all students and faculty on how to react and prevent bullying instances. Since 1999 over 40 states have enacted legislation that prohibits bullying and harassment, and have taken measures to report policies, programs, and procedures to students and parents (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009). By making parents aware of bullying and viewing their opinions, the instances could lessen which is why the question of whether parental involvement plays a role in student behaviors and bullying needs to be answered.

Risk Factors

Bullying is often defined as unprovoked aggressive behavior repeatedly carried out against victims who are unable to defend themselves (Smith, Ananiadou, & Cowie; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Arseneault et al. (2011) described bullying to mothers as “someone is being bullied when another child (a) says mean or hurtful things, makes fun, or calls a person mean and hurtful names; (b) completely ignores or excludes someone from their group of friends or leaves them out of things on purpose; (c) hits, kicks, or shoves a person or locks them in a room; (d) tells lies or spreads rumors about them; and (e) other hurtful things like these” (p. 66). Bullying is identified as one of the most predominant problems faced by children in the United States education system, as well as one of the most significant health risks to children (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). Bullying happens a lot more often than what is just seen and heard in the hallways and can take on many forms. Physical aggression, threats, insults, spreading rumors, social exclusion, and mocking the victim’s culture, disability, or sexual orientation are some of the more popular forms that happen on a regular basis. These forms of behavior can have some serious effects on children’s well beings. Children who are victimized or rejected by their peers are more likely to display physical, behavioral, developmental, and learning disabilities than matched control groups (Doren, Bullis & Benz 1996; Marini, Fairbairn, & Zuber, 2001). Arseneault et al. (2011) found that children who experience abuse early in life show adjustment problems such as posttraumatic disorders, depression, and conduct problems. Because bullying is primarily caused by fitting in with social groups, students with disabilities tend to be victimized more their non-disabled peers.

Students with Disabilities

Most experts agree that students with disabilities are harassed by their peers more often than their peers without disabilities. This causes a big problem as learning can already be difficult for these students without having to worry about bullying. For children with exceptionalities, learning may already be a struggle, and the co-occurrence of a disability and being a target for bullying can lead to increased rates of academic, social, and emotional problems (Mishna, 2003; Good, McIntosh, Gietz 2011). Students with specific disabilities such as Autism, Asperger's, and Emotional/Behavioral disorders stick out as targets much more frequently than non-disabled students. Reasoning for this is unknown but hypothesized that because of their difficulties with socializing and interacting with peers allows them stand out as a target. For example,

Asperger's Syndrome is an autism spectrum disorder in which individuals are unable to interpret social cues, often have special interests, and are pedantic in their expression. Children with Asperger's have social interactions that may involve extensive conversation about an all-consuming, intense special interest; and they may be characterized as verbose, eccentric, or overly formal in communication (As cited in, Carter, 2009, p. 467).

These social difficulties can lead to victimization amongst peers. Humphrey & Symes (2010), explain that pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are at least three times more likely to be bullied than other pupils, and report receiving significantly less social support from parents, classmates and friends. Students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) also tend to

engage in bullying but often as perpetration due to the aggression and emotions that are often displayed.

According to federal diagnostic criteria a student can be identified with a behavioral disorder by meeting one of the following criteria: (a) an inability to learn than cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors, (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers (c) inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances, (d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, and (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (Rose & Espelage, 2012).

They go on to say that students with emotional and behavioral disorders engage in higher levels of bullying behaviors when compared to students without disabilities and students with other special health care or educational needs (Monchy, Pijl, Zandberg, 2004; Van Cleave & Davis, 2006; Rose & Espelage, 2012). There have also been reported incidences of students with disabilities exhibiting more instances of being perpetrators of bullying. Rose et al. (2011) argues that perpetration of bullying by students with disabilities is often a learned behavior, a reaction to prolonged victimization, or an overall lack of social skills. Students with disabilities may act too aggressively toward the wrong peers or misinterpret social stimuli due to social information processing deficits. Often times the reasons that these students are involved in bullying situations is because they are misunderstood, not only by their peers but by teachers and support staff as well. Some research shows that educators are not trained to deal with moderate to severe levels of antisocial behaviors occurring among the school-age population of children and youth, including bullying perpetration and victimization (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010). For this

reason it is important for adults and students to be educated about students with disabilities and how their disabilities can affect their behaviors. This understanding along with school wide approaches to bullying could potentially decrease the amount of bullying instances.

School Wide Anti-Bullying Approaches

School districts use different anti-bullying methods however the school-wide approach seems to be what includes all students, including students with disabilities. Raskauskas & Modell (2011) state that the key to the success of any anti-bullying program is a “whole-school” approach. This approach creates a supportive school atmosphere, where children feel safe to report and are assured that staff care and will respond to reports of bullying and maltreatment. The whole-school approach involves educating and involving everyone affiliated with the school about bullying and their roles in changing the culture. This type of approach is important to the special education field as it does include all students and staff so that anyone that would be working with a student with a disability would be on the same page and have the same approach. In working with students with disabilities creating a plan against bullying is a lot like an IEP meeting where a team meets and interventions are created. Garcia Biggs, Simpson, and Gaus (2010) explain;

Using a multidisciplinary approach, a social worker can arrange a team meeting where intervention plans for the student would be developed. The intervention must address the student’s level of cognitive understanding, around which the intervention will be designed and implemented. The type of intervention designed for the student must be presented to, and developed with that student.

Once school districts identify bullying as a problem, involving the entire school in anti-bullying approaches should be the goal of all school personnel. One example is Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) which is a proactive, systems-level approach that provides tools and practices to help support students and staff and promote positive social and learning environments. A main feature of SWPBS is the focus on student outcomes; the fundamental goal of most systems is to provide supports to students to improve school achievement, social relations, and safety (Simosen et al., 2008; Good, McIntosh, Gietz 2011). They go on to explain that contributing to the effectiveness of SWPBS is the use of a three-tier approach that ensures the support of all students. In the primary tier, the focus is on simple preventative strategies, such as establishing, teaching, and acknowledging positively stated school expectations and using that language regularly during the school day. Secondary and tertiary intervention strategies target those students who do not respond to primary interventions and need more targeted and intensive support (Fairbanks, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2008). This intervention has resulted in an increased positive atmosphere in the school, more appropriate student behaviors, and more academically engaged time as well as decreases in instances of aggression, discipline referrals, and crime in middle school students (Metzler, Biglan, Rusby, & Sprague, 2001). Many of the anti-bullying interventions are big on teaching and including the students. Another approach, titled bullying prevention in positive behavior support (BP-PBS) was designed to (a) define and teach the concept of “being respectful” to all students in school, (b) to teach all students a three-step response (stop, walk, talk) that minimizes potential social reinforcement when they encounter disrespectful behavior, (c) to precorrect the three-step response prior to entering activities likely to include problematic behavior, (d) to teach an appropriate reply when the three-step response is used, and (e) to train staff on a universal strategy for responding when students report incidents

of problem behavior (Ross & Horner, 2009). Several interventions include three components; awareness building, efficacy building, and skill building. Awareness building creates a campus environment that is aware of disability needs and is sensitive to bullying, through education. Raising awareness by teaching the definition of bullying to both students and staff is key. Efficacy building refers to the ability of students and staff to recognize and act to stop bullying. Raskauskas and Modell (2011) suggest training for key stake holders such as students, parents, teachers, aides, administrators, yard duty, food service, transportation, security officers and others personnel students may come across. They believe that this forms the basis for cultivating self-efficacy among those in a position to witness and report victimization. Skill building provides appropriate, up-to-date, and timely preparation to staff and students to recognize and handle potential bullying and harassment which is critical to any program. In very few approaches I have looked at parents were only included in a few. Parental involvement plays a huge role in not only student achievement but in behaviors and self-concept as well.

Parental Involvement

Because bullying is a dynamic process, factors that influence involvement may be related to interactions between an individual and his or her family, peer group, school community, and societal norms (Rose & Espelage, 2012). Many factors can contribute, but child rearing practices have various effects on that child as a student in a school community. Quilliams and Beran (2009) investigate whether parental involvement is directly related to achievement or mediated by student motivation and self-concept. This study contained four different measures; achievement, academic motivation, self-concept, and parental involvement. The results of this test showed that achievement was positively correlated with motivation as well as with self-concept. Achievement was also positively and directly related to parental involvement.

Therefore, children who perceive that their parents have positive values about education and take an interest in their school are likely to have high levels of achievement (Quilliams & Beran, 2009). To sum up the results, achievement was directly related to parental involvement and academic motivation, and to a lesser extent, self-concept. As students become adolescents they are encouraged to start thinking about occupational goals for their future. Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit (2004) assert that “parent academic involvement may ensure that adolescents obtain academic skills and knowledge that prepare them for considering higher level occupations”. The study focused on whether parent academic involvement is associated with career and educational aspirations, and also examined the extent to which parental involvement plays a role on a student’s self-concept. As a result, adolescents from families with higher parental education had fewer behavior problems, higher achievement levels, and higher educational aspirations but not work aspirations. To sum up the results, all mean-level differences favored adolescents from families with higher parental educational levels (Hill et al., 2004). In another study, Houtenville & Conway (2009) found that the types of parental involvement play a role in student achievement. The findings suggest that volunteering and perhaps attending meetings are the most different from the rest of the types of involvement which include mother and father’s education level, family income, and dinnertime conversations. It was also found that single parenthood is positively related to parental effort which suggests that perhaps, like an additional sibling, being married represents a constraint on the time spent with the child. These studies indicate that parental involvement impacts not only students’ academic achievement, but also their behaviors and outlooks for the future is well. This is why it is important to include parents as well as the communities in anti-bullying school wide approaches so that the risks and harm from bullying situations can hopefully decrease.

Ginsburg and Bronstein (1993) argue that both general parenting styles and parental behaviors that are directly relevant to children's academic performance need to be examined in relation to children's intrinsic/extrinsic motivation and academic performance. The purpose of this study is to examine three parental/family factors in relation to fifth graders' intrinsic/extrinsic motivational orientation in the classroom and academic performance. The three factors include: parental surveillance of homework, parental reactions to both good and bad grades, and styles of family interaction reflecting particular dimensions of parenting behavior. In regards to the methodology, the sample of subjects was primarily Caucasian and made up of 93 fifth-grade children and the parenting adults with whom they lived. Participants were selected from seven elementary schools in a northern New England school district and were recruited through a flier announcing the study. Data was collected by a home visit by trained field workers who administered interviews and questionnaires to the fifth graders and their parents. This was a three year study investigating family factors related to children's transition to middle school, families and children were paid one hundred dollars for their participation. There were several measures in this study including motivational orientation both intrinsic and extrinsic, teacher report of child intrinsic motivation, school performance (academic grades and achievement scores), and family factors (parental surveillance of homework, perceived parental reactions to grades, and perceived family styles).

“Overall the findings confirmed the researchers hypothesis, that based on developmental and social psychological theory, it was predicted that parental behaviors and family styles which were controlling of children's independent thinking and behavior, critical or punitive, or uninvolved, would be associated

with a more extrinsic motivational orientation and poorer academic performance” (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993, p. 242).

Factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, and occupational outlook can also be affected by parental involvement. We see these extra factors being affected quite often in adolescent students.

Problems and Prevalence of Bullying

Bullying is a serious issue in schools due to the potential negative consequences of victimization. Blake, Lund, Zhou, Kwok, and Benz (2012) describe bullying victimization as characterized by repeated exposure to aggressive acts over time intended to cause physical harm, psychological distress, or humiliation. Between 15% to 23% of elementary students and 20% to 28% of secondary school students report being bullied within a 6 month to 1 year period. Research shows that these numbers increase for students with disabilities and that the effects that victimization can have on a student can be detrimental and life lasting. Overall, the act of bullying is based on complex interactions between individuals, families, peer groups, schools, communities and cultures which lead to an infinite number of variables that can influence interactions (Rose, Espelage, Aragon, & Elliot, 2011). Therefore it is important to investigate all of these variables and find ways to increase all of the key player’s knowledge of bullying prevention and to decrease the amount of bullying situations going on both in and out school. This is why it is essential to examine how parental involvement affects student’s views and actions towards bullying and the way they treat others in an educational setting.

Methodology

Methods

To examine the question of whether or not parental involvement impacts student behaviors, opinions and actions towards bullying a qualitative approach will be used. This study used student observation, surveys, and interviews to gather data. . The observations were used to help the researcher gain a sense of when bullying instances occur, what types of students are involved in bullying, and how other students react to bullying situations. In order to gain a true sense as to when inappropriate behaviors occur throughout the school day the researcher observed students in the classroom as well as in physical education class, lunch and during transition times, particularly in the hallway when switching classes or packing up to go home for the day. The surveys used were 6-question surveys given to both the parents and the students which allowed the researcher to then compare student versus parent opinions. The first five questions on the parent survey are: “I help my child with homework every night”, “My child is involved in extracurricular activities”, “I discuss appropriate and inappropriate behaviors with my child”, “I feel that social media contributes to behaviors in school”, and “I feel that my child would discuss bullying instances with a trusted adult”. The parents answered the questions by circling one of the following three responses: often, sometimes, never. The researcher gave a numerical value to each answer to then analyze the data. The sixth and final question lists examples of eight behaviors and requires the parents and students to circle which behaviors they feel are inappropriate. The student survey consisted of the same questions, reworded to address the student with the same responses. The researcher used this data to compare parental and student views on both parental involvement and appropriate versus inappropriate behaviors. This data was used to determine if parental views differ from the views of their fifth grade student.

The researcher used this information to analyze the data using both bar and frequency graphs. Once the surveys and observations were complete, the teacher was asked ten interview questions which covered her opinion on areas such as parental involvement in her classroom, appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, what types of students she sees involved in bullying situations, school wide and classroom wide approaches to anti-bullying, and more. These interview questions will help the researcher to get the full picture on both parental involvement and bullying behaviors as she is the expert on both her students and their families.

Participants

Based on the researchers past educational experience, one fifth grade classroom was chosen. The researcher asked permission of both the elementary principal as well as the classroom teacher to use these students and parents as participants in the study. The particular classroom chosen is located in a rural school district in Western New York and has 19 students in the class. There is a wide variety of educational levels in this classroom as it is an inclusion room. There are students with IEP's, 504 plans, and one gifted and talented student who receives materials in grade levels above him in addition to the fifth grade curriculum to challenge him. The parents of these students will also indirectly be participants in the study if they choose to complete the survey given to them. The families with students in this classroom also come from a variety of social-economic statuses. The classroom teacher will also be a participant as she will be interviewed and act as the expert on the behaviors of the students and on the level of involvement of the parents. There is also a variety of cultural backgrounds such as Caucasian, Native American, Hispanic, and African American intermixed in this classroom which may also be taken into account. The researcher does plan to pay extra attention to the special education students when observing to determine if they are in fact victimized more than their non-disabled

peers. Once the classroom and participants were chosen, informed consent forms were distributed to both the parents and the students to gain permission to be involved in the study. Of the 19 students in the classroom, 13 parental consent forms were returned and 13 student consent forms were completed which gives a total of 26 participants in addition to the teacher. The six students who chose not to participate in the study were not penalized in any way and were asked to read quietly at their desks while the students completed their surveys.

Procedures/Tasks:

To complete the study, consent forms were sent home to the parents to give permission for both them and their child to participate in the study. Once these were received, the students of parents who gave consent were then given their own consent form to agree to participate in the study. Students whose consent forms were not returned were not able to participate in the study. There were 13 parental consent forms and 13 student consent forms returned. There were six students and 6 parents who chose not to participate in the study. Once consent forms were received, the researcher began observations by observing students to examine their behaviors both in and out of the classroom in hopes to view various bullying situations. The researcher went in to the classroom to observe behaviors during class but also went with them to physical education class and lunch to see them in a more social environment. Observations also took place during transition times, for example when students were at their lockers, as this was reported to be a popular time for bullying instances to occur. These observations helped to show what students are perpetrators and what students tend to be victimized which allowed the researcher to gain character traits of each role for students of that age level. After the first day of observation, the classroom teacher distributed the researcher's survey to go home with each student in the class which required the parents of the student to complete based on their own opinions of

appropriate and inappropriate student behaviors (Appendix B). There were no names included on either the parent or student survey, each student was given a number which was put on both surveys to easily compare. The parents were given one week to return the surveys, however 9 were returned the next day and by the end of the week we had the 13. Once the parent surveys were returned, the researcher then distributed the same survey to the students to complete on a day that observations were taking place. Because of the different educational levels in the classroom, the teacher had the researcher take a group of students into the hall way to read the survey to them. During this time the researcher had five students in the hall where the questions were read to them one at a time. The students needed clarification a few times but particularly on the social media question. While the students who were able to participate were completing their surveys, the six students who chose not to participate continued with reading time at their seats.

After all of the surveys were complete, the researcher collected them and began sorting them to match the student number with the parent number for comparison. To complete the research and gain a full picture, the teacher was then given ten interview questions to complete. The questions touched upon parental involvement of families in her classroom, frequency of bullying instances, personal experiences with bullying, what types of students are typically involved in bullying, her classroom approach and the school-wide approach to anti-bullying procedures, and students with disabilities compared to their non-disabled peers. The classroom teacher is the expert on both her students and families in her classroom so these interview questions will be used to bring all of the data together.

Potential Limitations

When designing this study, some practical limitations were considered. One limitation was that parents might choose not to complete and return the survey. In attempt to control this we encouraged the students to get a response from their parents so that they can work towards a particular classroom goal. If in fact we did not receive a response from a parent, the researcher discussed the level of involvement of this parent with the teacher to see if this was an accurate display of their involvement previously; if it was they were characterized as having little to no involvement. Of the 19 students in the classroom, 13 of the parents completed the survey which is roughly 68% of the class. When discussed with the teacher she felt that this was a very good response rate, considering what she typically sees. One other limitation that was considered was that students may not behave as they normally do when a new person is in the room observing. This is why observations were spread over a period of two weeks to give the students a chance to get used to someone being in the room. The behaviors observed were also verified with the teacher to examine whether or not they were typical behaviors that were observed. The researcher was familiar with some of the students in the room from past substitute teaching experiences so the students did not seem too concerned and seemed to act as they normally do.

Findings

Observations

Based on several observations, inappropriate behaviors tend to occur more often outside of the classroom, particularly in physical education class, lunch, and during transition times. On one occasion in the classroom, the group was playing Vocabulary Jeopardy where the class was divided into two teams. Overall there were not very many inappropriate behaviors observed; in

fact several times throughout the game team members were encouraging each other by giving complements. Teams also cheered for one another when someone answered a question correctly. Some inappropriate behaviors that were observed were inappropriate touching such as nudging and pinching. One student also made a comment: “whatever team we are on, we always win”. When this statement was made, it was obvious that it had hurt some of the students’ feelings, as they had a sad look on their face. Over all this particular game encouraged students to work with others by working as a team and allowed them to encourage one another to do well.

During the rest of classroom observations, there were very few instances of bullying and inappropriate behaviors as the teacher was always in the room and did not allow for them to be off task too often. While in reading groups, groups that were not working with the teacher had independent work to do at their desks. This was when the researcher observed a few inappropriate behaviors occurring. Some behaviors that were observed were gossiping, teasing, and some inappropriate touching like nudging and tickling. After observing these behaviors, they were discussed with the teacher and verified that these are the typical types of inappropriate behaviors she does witness in her classroom.

Students were also observed during a physical education class where they happened to be playing lacrosse on that particular day. Students were split into groups; the gym teacher picked a team captain and then the captains were able to choose their team members. The gym teacher explained that in the past they used to separate by boys versus girls but they had been having an issue with one girl bullying another girl. The gym teacher had these two girls be the captains to ensure that they would be separated. While playing the game there was some typical “rough housing” going on, but there was also occasional pushing and shoving where the teacher had to interfere. One particular time this led to name calling and the student who called the other

student a name had to sit out. The gym teacher explained that although these behaviors are inappropriate, this is what she typically sees of all of her gym classes.

Students were also observed during a lunch period where the researcher was able to sit in the corner and view students in an unstructured social context. Students were able to choose where they wanted to sit which is where it became apparent that exclusion was occurring. This particular behavior was more evident with the girls than it was with the boys as there was one group of girls who left out two girls who wanted to sit with them. Once this behavior occurred, it then led to whispering and gossiping between the two different groups of girls. When observing the boys, there was some teasing and occasionally some inappropriate touching or taking someone's things. After observing these behaviors in lunch, they were discussed with the teacher, and the researcher remembered that these were the types of behaviors that were always reported while substituting.

Finally, students were observed during transition times, particularly when they were released to go to their lockers at the end of the day. During this time two girls were observed kicking each other, however a peer bystander asked "why were you kicking her" which then caused them to separate. Other inappropriate behaviors observed during this time were name calling, teasing, and throwing others' things around (such as a hat). Only on the one occasion did a bystander say something to interfere with what was going on.

Based on all of the behaviors observed it was evident that inappropriate behaviors occur in all areas of the school day and that there are specific behaviors that occur more frequently in different settings. It was confirmed that inappropriate behaviors do occur more frequently outside of the classroom during special classes or lunch, than they do in the classroom when a

teacher is always present. The behaviors that were observed were included on the parent and student surveys.

Parent and Student Survey

Both parents and students were given a six question survey. Questions 1-5 were statements with the following response choices: often, sometimes, or never. For analysis purposes, the responses were given a numerical value; 3 = often, 2 = sometimes, and 1 = never. Question 6 gave a list of eight different behaviors and asked participants to circle which ones they felt were examples of inappropriate behaviors. A Pearson correlation was done comparing parent answers to student answers for each question.

Figure A – Pearson Correlations

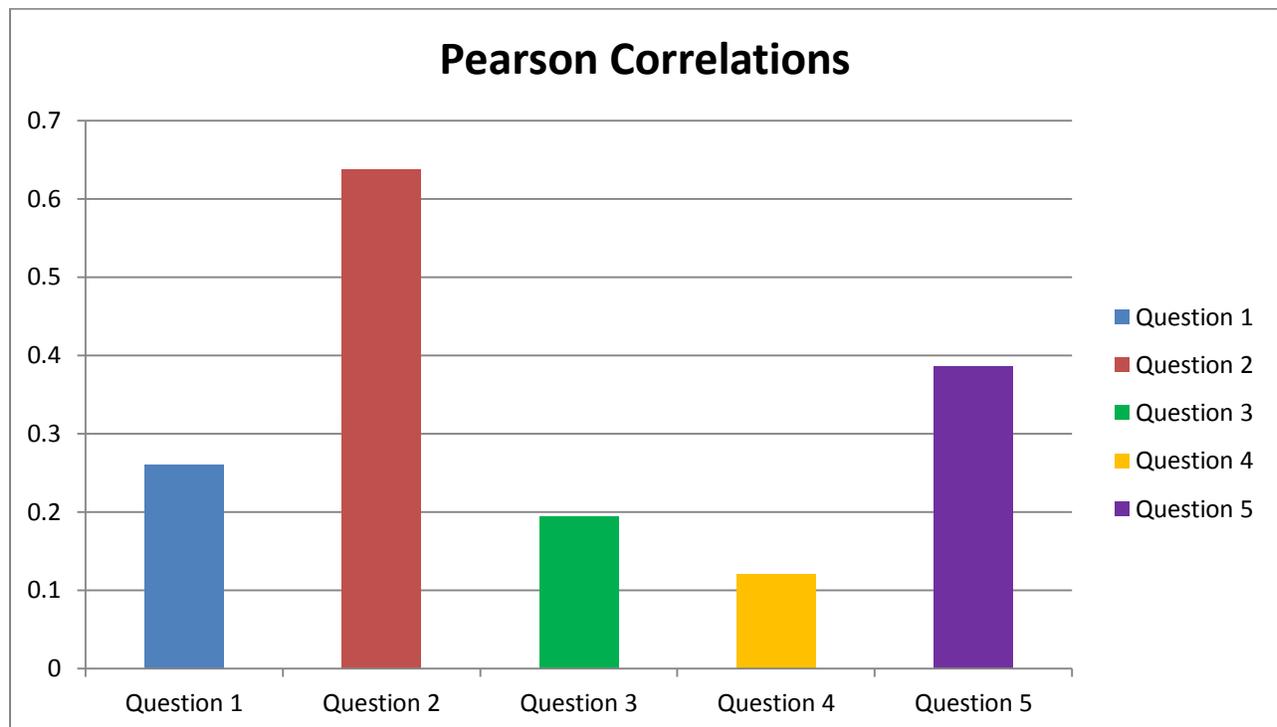


Figure A shows that Question 2, which stated: *My child participates in extra-curricular activities*, was the only one where there was a statistically positive correlation. Parent and student answers for Question 5, which stated: *I feel that my child would discuss bullying with a trusted adult*, were also moderately positively correlated. All other questions had low positive correlations. Figure A shows that parents and students had different opinions on the level of participation in extra-curricular activities as well as some difference of opinion on whether or not the child would feel comfortable going to a trusted adult with information regarding bullying.

Means and standard deviations were also calculated for each question to compare exactly how the parents’ answers matched up with the students.

Figure B –Parent and Student Question 1

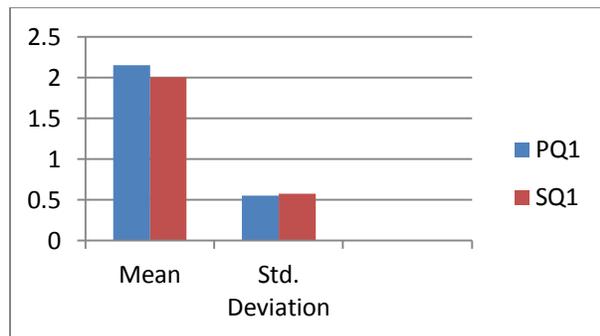


Figure C- Parent and Student Question 2

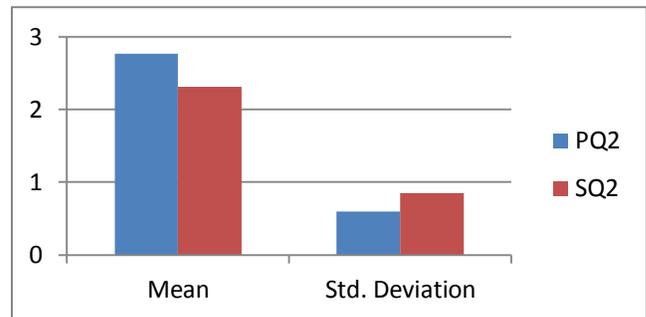


Figure B shows that for Question 1: *I spend time with my child on homework each night*, the mean answer was 2 or “sometimes”. Some parents wrote notes on their survey stating that their child goes to an afterschool program and comes home with their homework complete and one stated that they check their homework every night but do not necessarily spend time with them on it. Figure C shows that for Question 2: *My child participates in extra-curricular activities*, the parents mean score was between 2.5 and 3, with most parents answering “often” and the students’ scores were between 2 and 2.5, with most students answering “sometimes”.

Figure D - Parent and Student Question 3

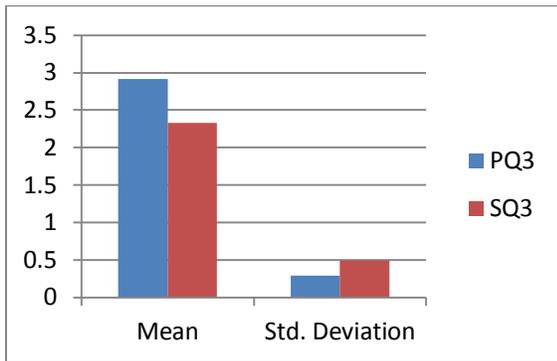


Figure E – Parent and Student Question 4

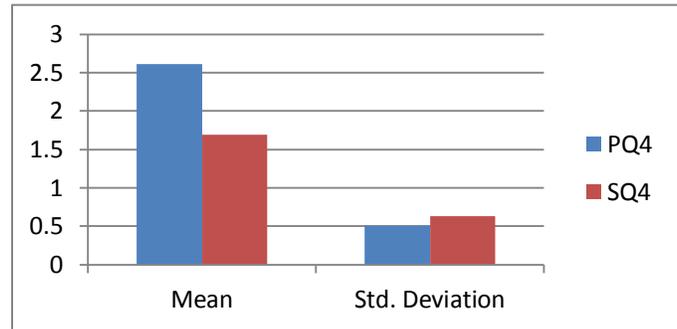


Figure D shows that for Question 3: *I have discussed appropriate and inappropriate behaviors regarding bullying with my child*, the parents’ mean score was 3 or “often” and the students’ mean score was between 2 and 3 indicating a low level of agreement with the parents. Figure E shows that for Question 4: *I feel that social media contributes to behaviors in school*, the mean score for parents was just above a 2.5 and for the students the mean scores were between a 1.5 and 2. This question needed to be explained to several of the students which may have caused the difference of opinions.

Figure F – Parent and Student Question 5

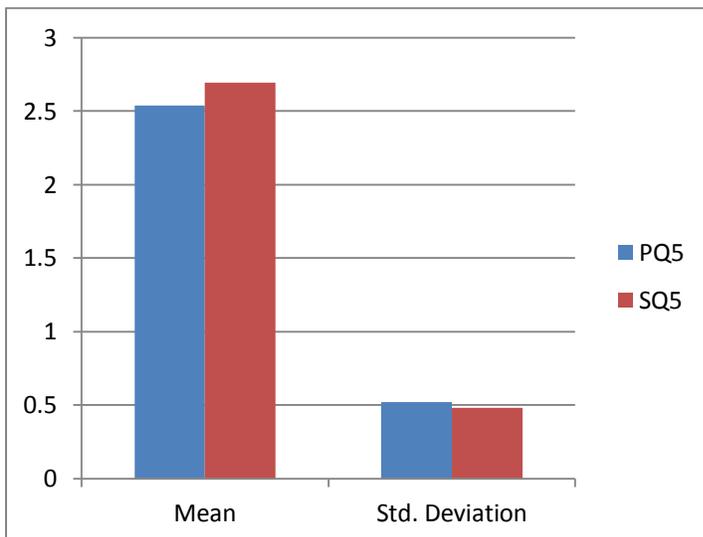


Figure F shows that for Question 5: *I feel that my child would discuss bullying issues with a trusted adult*, the means for both parents and students were between 2 and 3, indicating that majority chose either “often” or “sometimes”.

Question 6 was formatted differently than the previous questions, and asked participants to circle which of the listed behaviors they felt would be inappropriate in school. The following behaviors were listed: spreading rumors/gossip, hitting, verbal teasing, tickling, excluding others, interrupting, school pranks, and commenting negatively on someone’s looks.

Figure G – Parent and Student Question 6

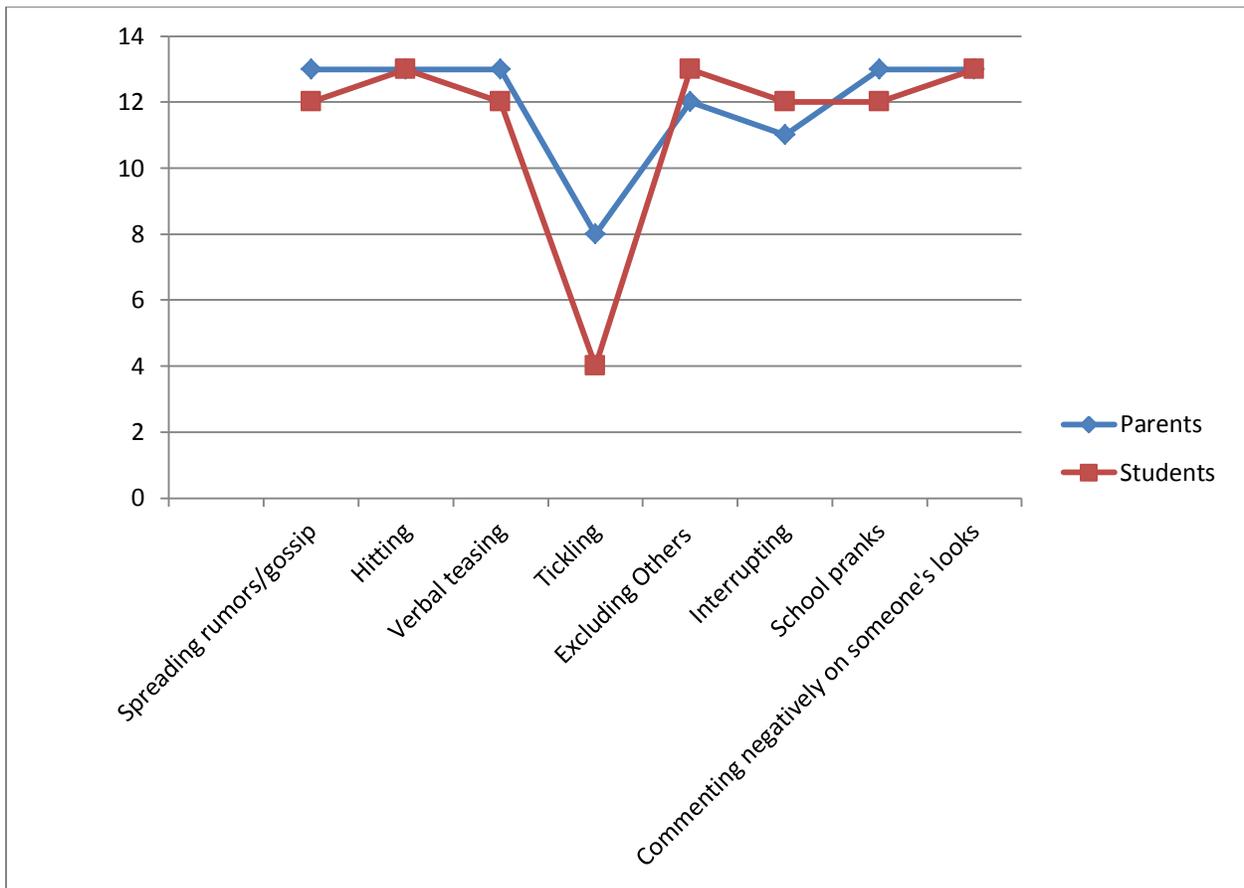


Figure G is a frequency chart that shows the rates of both parents and students that circled the behavior as being inappropriate. The majority of both parents and students felt that all of the behaviors except tickling, were inappropriate for school. The only behaviors that 100% participants agreed on as being inappropriate were hitting and commenting negatively on someone's looks. All 13 parents indicated that spreading rumors/gossip, hitting, verbal teasing, and school pranks were inappropriate. All 13 students agreed that hitting, excluding others, and commenting negatively on someone's looks were considered inappropriate. Overall, the results of question six showed that the majority of the participants found all of the behaviors to be considered inappropriate with the exception of tickling.

Teacher Interview

After the surveys were completed and turned in to be analyzed, the researcher developed questions to ask the teacher during the interview. The questions were developed based on subtopics surrounding both parental involvement and bullying.

When speaking with the classroom teacher, she stated on numerous occasions that she had a much different group this year than she has in the past. She stated that overall she has had a great relationship with parents this year and often gets involvement from the parents. However, based on her teaching experience, she felt that parental involvement absolutely affects children's behaviors and academics. The classroom teacher also did not deny that bullying is happening in her classroom; she said that it happens more often during lunch, special classes, and transition times than it does when under direct instruction. She also indicated that it is the students that have lower self-confidence and not necessarily students with disabilities who are most involved in bullying-types of situations. She made a point to mention that both she and her school district

make a point to teach students from a young age that *all* students are at different ability levels and that no two students are the same so that everyone needs to be treated equally. She said she feels that this eliminates some of the bullying against students with disabilities.

Discussion

The observations, surveys, and interview confirmed some of the researcher's questions about the role parental involvement plays in children's behaviors in school. The observations showed that bullying instances and inappropriate behaviors took place more often during more unstructured activities such as physical education classes, lunch, and especially during transition times. Observations also provided evidence that bystanders often do not say anything when witnessing inappropriate behaviors; there were no reported instances of a bystander telling a trusted adult during the observation period. The researcher had hypothesized that students with disabilities were more often the victims of bullying, however, this study indicated that this is not necessarily the case. Although, this study examined a very small sample size, the teacher confirmed that the students at this age level that seemed to be victimized more frequently are students that have low self-esteem. The teacher stated that students in this particular sample are taught from a young age that students all learn at different levels and have different abilities, and should not be treated differently because of this.

The surveys showed how both parents and students felt about parental involvement, as well as appropriate versus inappropriate behaviors for school. The intended sample size was the entire fifth grade class which was a total of 19 students and 19 parents. Thirteen parental consent forms were returned which led to a sample size of 13 parents and 13 students, which equals approximately a 68% rate of participation. Parents and students seemed to be in agreement on

questions regarding parental involvement and appropriate and inappropriate student behaviors in relation to bullying. Parents and their fifth grade students answered similarly on almost all occasions. Question 6 was answered on a comparable fashion across the board. As previously indicated in *Figure G*, the chart below shows the exact number of parents and students that felt that the behavior listed was considered to be an inappropriate behavior in school.

Inappropriate Behaviors	Parents	Students
Spreading rumors/gossip	13	12
Hitting	13	13
Verbal teasing	13	12
Tickling	8	4
Excluding Others	12	13
Interrupting	11	12
School pranks	13	12
Commenting negatively on someone's looks	13	13

Overall, the surveys helped to indicate how involved parents are in their children's education and extracurricular activities, and also indicated what they felt were inappropriate behaviors for a school environment. The researcher then used the teacher interview to go more in depth about both parental involvement as well as bullying instances and student behaviors.

The classroom teacher served as the expert in this study, as she has been working with the students and their families for almost the entire year. One interesting related limitation to consider is that the teacher indicated that this year, her group of students was much different than in years past. She stated that she had a higher level of parental involvement this year as only two families did not attend a parent-teacher conference which is not the norm for her typically. In regards to parental involvement playing a role in student behavior, the teacher agreed that this does in fact play a huge role in how their child behaves in school. When discussing what types of

students are typically involved in bullying instances, the teacher did not feel that it was necessarily students with disabilities but students with lower self-confidence who may be struggling with identity or relationships either in school or at home. The teacher went on to explain that all students are taught from a young age in the district that they need to be exceptional of all learners and that everyone learns at their own rate. She stated that this really helps to eliminate the bullying instances specifically against students with disabilities.

In terms of handling bullying instances and school-wide procedures, the teacher indicated that they do have a policy in place which involves a restitution procedure where the elementary counselor handles the investigation, restitution, and implementation of appropriate action. For this reason, the teacher does not typically have to discuss with parents when their child is involved in a bullying instance as it is handled by other personnel. She stated that if an instance is brought to her attention she records it in a log and refers the situation to appropriate staff. The teacher did explain that when inappropriate behaviors are displayed in her classroom she does have her own classroom management plan in place to handle these types of situations. Overall the teacher confirmed that parental involvement does play a significant role in their children's behaviors in school, and that bullying instances do occur frequently, but primarily outside of the classroom in areas of transition, lunch, or special classes.

When beginning the study the researcher's anticipated limitations were that parents may choose not to complete and return the survey and also that students may not behave as they normally would with an adult observing them. Thirteen of the 19 parents chose to participate in the study, which the teacher felt was a good sample based on her typical return rate, especially given that they were only given one week to return the survey. For future research, a larger sample size would be ideal so that we could gain a sense of parental involvement and student

behaviors across all grade levels to see if these results are typical of students of all ages. In terms of students' behavior while being observed, the researcher confirmed with the teacher that the behaviors that were seen were typically seen on a day to day basis with her students. For future research, the researcher would like to spend a significantly larger amount of time observing students during transition times and lunch specifically, as this was when the majority of inappropriate behaviors were displayed.

Overall, the results from this study indicated that parents, teachers, and students all play a role in the way that students behave in school. It also showed what parents and students felt to be appropriate versus inappropriate behaviors for a school setting, and parental involvement in their child's academic life plays a huge role in the way their child behaves and treats others in school.

Appendices

Appendix A

Consent Forms

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARENTS

This form describes a research study being conducted with parents and students and their perceptions of bullying. The purpose of this research is to understand the perceptions of parents as well as students on appropriate student behaviors and the definition of bullying. The person conducting the research is a student at SUNY Fredonia. If you agree to participate as well as to have your child participate in this study, s/he will be observed over a few afternoons both in and out of the classroom and will participate in a survey on their views of bullying and appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Parents will also be asked to complete the same survey that the students take so that views can be compared.

The possible benefit from being in this study could be that information will be learned that will allow students to recognize appropriate versus inappropriate behaviors and will allow teachers and other educators who read the study to learn ways in which they can help parents become involved in their students behaviors in school as well as how to lessen bullying instances.

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. The choice to participate or to not participate will not affect your child's grades or class standing. S/he is free to change her/his mind or stop being in the study at any time.

I understand that:

1. My child's participation is voluntary and s/he has the right to refuse to answer any questions. S/he will have a chance to discuss any questions s/he has about the study with the researcher at any point during the study.
2. My child's confidentiality is protected. Her/his name will not be written on any documentation, the researcher will use student numbers to identify the students. There will be no way to connect my child to written data. If any publication results from this research, s/he would not be identified by name. Results will be given anonymously and in group form only, so that neither the participants nor their schools can be identified. Participation will have no effect on grades status.
3. My child's participation involves being observed over a few afternoons so that the researcher can gain a sense of typical student behaviors. My child will also participate in a survey about appropriate behaviors and bullying instances. My child will also include their parents in the study on student behaviors and bullying by having the parents take the same study.

4. Approximately 40 people will take part in this study. The results will be used for the completion of a research project by the primary researcher.
5. Data and consent forms will be kept separately in a locked filing cabinet by the investigator and will be destroyed by shredding when the research has been completed.

You are being asked whether or not you will participate in this study as well as whether or not you permit your child to participate in this study. If you wish to give permission to participate, and you agree with the statement below, please sign in the space provided. Remember, you may change your mind at any point and withdraw from the study. Your child can refuse to participate even if you have given permission for her/him to participate.

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to allow my child to participate as a participant in this project. I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction.

If you have any questions you may contact:

<u>Primary researcher</u>	<u>Faculty Advisor</u>
Name: Kristin Corsaro	Name: Carrie Fitzgerald
Phone Number: (716) 785-3163	Department and phone number: Education Department (716) 673-4652
Email address: cors9115@fredonia.edu	Email address: Carrie.Fitzgerald@fredonia.edu

Signature of Parent /Date

Child's name _____

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR MINORS

This form describes a research study being conducted with parents and students and their views of bullying. The purpose of this research is to understand what bullying means and what appropriate student behavior looks like to both parents and students. The person conducting the research is a student at SUNY Fredonia. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be observed over a period of a few afternoons both in and out of the classroom and will participate in a survey regarding bullying and appropriate versus inappropriate behaviors.

The possible benefit from being in this study could be that information will be learned that will allow students to recognize appropriate versus inappropriate behaviors and will allow teachers and other educators who read the study to learn ways in which they can help parents become involved in their students behaviors in school as well as how to lessen bullying instances.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. The choice to participate or to not participate, will not affect your grades or class standing. You are free to change your mind or stop being in the study at any time.

I understand that:

1. My participation is voluntary and I have the right to refuse to answer any questions. I will have a chance to discuss any questions I have about the study with the researcher.
2. My confidentiality is protected. My name will not be written on any documents as I will be given a student number by the researcher and Mrs. Restivo. There will be no way to connect me to written data. If any publication results from this research, I would not be identified by name.
3. My participation involves being observed over a few afternoons so that the researcher can gain a sense of typical student behaviors. I will also participate in a survey about bullying over the course of a week. I will also include my parents in the study on student behaviors and bullying.
4. Approximately 40 people will take part in this study. The results will be used for the completion of a research project by the primary researcher.
5. Data and consent forms will be kept separately in a locked filing cabinet by the researcher and will be destroyed by shredding when the research has been completed.

You are being asked whether or not you want to participate in this study. If you wish to participate, and you agree with the statement below, please sign in the space provided. Remember, you may change your mind at any point and withdraw from the study. You can refuse to participate even if your parent/guardian gives permission for you to participate.

If you have any questions you may contact:

<u>Primary researcher</u>	<u>Faculty Advisor</u>
Name: Kristin Corsaro	Name: Carrie Fitzgerald
Phone Number: (716) 785-3163	Department and phone number: Education Department (716) 673-4652
Email address: cors9115@fredonia.edu	Email address: Carrie.Fitzgerald@fredonia.edu

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to participate in this project.

Signature of participant /Date

Birth date of participant

Signature of a witness 18 years of age or older /Date

Appendix B

Parent Survey

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Please respond to the following survey as it pertains to your 5th grade student. Your participation in this research project is greatly appreciated!! 😊

1. I spend time with my child on homework each night.

Often Sometimes Never

2. My child participates in extra-curricular activities. (i.e., chorus, band, basketball, little league, etc.)

Often Sometimes Never

3. I have discussed appropriate and inappropriate behaviors regarding bullying with my child.

Often Sometimes Never

4. I feel that social media contributes to behaviors in school.

Often Sometimes Never

5. I feel that my child would discuss bullying issues with a trusted adult.

Often Sometimes Never

6. Circle which items you feel are examples of inappropriate behaviors in school.

Spreading rumors/gossip	Excluding others
Hitting	Interrupting
Verbal teasing	School pranks
Tickling	Commenting negatively on someone's looks

Student #: _____ **Parent Signature:** _____

Appendix C

Student Survey

Dear Students:

Please respond to the following survey as it pertains to you in 5th grade. Your participation in this research project is greatly appreciated!! 😊

1. I spend time with my parents on homework each night.

Often Sometimes Never

2. I participate in extra-curricular activities. (i.e., chorus, band, basketball, little league, etc.)

Often Sometimes Never

3. My parents have discussed appropriate and inappropriate behaviors regarding bullying with me.

Often Sometimes Never

4. I feel that social media (i.e., cell phones/texting, iPad's, email) contributes to behaviors in school.

Often Sometimes Never

5. I feel comfortable discussing bullying issues with a trusted adult.

Often Sometimes Never

6. Circle which items you feel are examples of inappropriate behaviors in school.

Spreading rumors/gossip	Excluding others
Hitting	Interrupting
Verbal teasing	School pranks
Tickling	Commenting negatively on someone's looks

Student #: _____

Appendix D

Teacher Interview Questions

1. How do you feel the level of parental involvement is in your classroom?
2. What do parents do that tell you that they are involved in their children's education?
3. What challenges do you face when trying to increase parental involvement in your classroom?
4. Do you feel that the level of parental involvement affects their child's behaviors?
5. Do you feel that bullying is a problem in your classroom and/or district?
6. From your experience, what types of students do you typically see involved in bullying instances?
7. From your experience, do you feel that students with disabilities are involved in bullying situations more or less than their non-disabled peers?
8. What are some typical inappropriate behaviors that you see in your classroom?
9. From your experience, how do parents typically handle hearing that their child has been involved in a bullying situation?
10. Does the district follow an anti-bullying policy? If so, which one and do you feel that it is effective?

Appendix E

Teacher Interview with Answers

1. How do you feel the level of parental involvement is in your classroom?

The parents of students for the most part this year have been very involved with their child's academic progress and overall performance.

2. What do parents do that tell you that they are involved in their children's education?

During two sets of parent teacher conferences this school year 18 out of 19 parent(s) attended their child's conference. Parents have overwhelmingly been gracious in wanting to attend student plays as well as field trips this year.

3. What challenges do you face when trying to increase parental involvement in your classroom?

There have not been as many challenges with this particular group of students as in past years. There have been two students whom extra parent teacher communication was required or requested and the parents did not follow through on returning information or rescheduling and attending a conference, even with continued contact both phone and letter. I maintain a log of all communication or attempts at communication with parents.

4. Do you feel that the level of parental involvement affects their child's behaviors?

The level of parental involvement absolutely affects the child's academic and behavioral performance at school. If the parents appear to the child to be disinterested in school performance, so do the children. Children learn the value and importance of school based off of how much their parents value and prioritize school, this is my personal belief.

5. Do you feel that bullying is a problem in your classroom and/or district?

Bullying has been a problem within the class of kids this year, however it tends to happen during times the students are not being directly instructed within the classroom. Lunch, Specials and Hallway/Locker interactions seem to be the time when incidents have occurred and been reported. There have been several incidents of this occurring throughout this year during those times from students within my class.

6. From your experience, what types of students do you typically see involved in bullying instances?

In my personal opinion, the types of students tend to be those who have a lower self-confidence themselves. Possibly struggling with their own identity, both in relationships at home and at school.

7. From your experience, do you feel that students with disabilities are involved in bullying situations more or less than their non-disabled peers?

Whether it be students with disabilities within a classroom or general placements I have found it is important to work throughout the year to acknowledge, with ALL students, that not every learner has the same learning style or approaches learning in the same manner. It is important to set a strong tone of acceptance within the classroom, and maintain and model that the classroom is a “safe zone” for ALL learners. I have not experienced bullying of students with disabilities, we build on a level of acceptance and inclusion of all.

8. What are some typical inappropriate behaviors that you see in your classroom?

The types of inappropriate behaviors are minimal and typical for students within the 9 to 12 years of age range. Inability to remain focused, and silly behavior that is often distracting to others around them tends to be at the forefront. Off task behavior is typically the most problematic especially when the class routine is interrupted.

9. From your experience, how do parents typically handle hearing that their child has been involved in a bullying situation?

Parent’s reaction to bullying situations are usually handled by the School Intervention Specialist, Principal and Counselor. Rarely is a situation of bullying handled currently by the classroom teacher. If bullying incident is reported to the classroom teacher, the teacher is to log the incident and report the information to the appropriate personnel.

10. Does the district follow an anti-bullying policy? If so, which one and do you feel that it is effective?

The district does follow an anti-bullying policy and has a restitution policy and procedure in place. Currently our school counselor handles the Elementary investigation, follow-up and restitution plan and implementation. I have seen some success with this procedure – however as bullying tends to happen when students are not being directly supervised, I truly wonder how many incidents go unseen or unreported.

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