

**Exploring School Specific Context and Bullying Data: Informing Practice with Evidence**

by

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if professional development using school contextual data would provide deeper understanding and attention to the important issue of student bullying. This was primarily a quantitative study. Phase 1 involved using data from the pre-existing student and teacher needs assessments to create the school specific professional development. The researcher examined the use of school specific needs assessment data to inform the staff on bullying knowledge and beliefs about bullying. The needs assessment domains analyzed were perception, prevalence, beliefs, and prevention. The study was conducted using a comparison treatment group design. Phase 2 involved administering the Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument (BSEI) to the comparison group prior to the intervention and to the treatment group after the school specific intervention. Phase 3 involved providing a follow-up session to each participating school and administering the Indicators of Professional Learning Communities Instrument (IPLCI).

Research questions were addressed through three instruments created by the researcher. The instruments were tested for validity and reliability and were found to be both. A paper pencil design was utilized for all instruments. The researcher designed the treatment for each participating school then administered the Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument (BSEI) to the comparison and treatment groups at specified times. The domains analyzed in the BSEI were bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs. As a follow-up to the treatment session, the researcher provided an additional session to each school participating to discuss the value of professional

learning communities in solving school related problems such as bullying. Additional data was collected using the third instrument, Indicators of Professional Learning Communities Instrument (IPLCI), to measure the participant's perception of their school as a PLC. Descriptive statistics and analysis of variance were the primary methods used to analyze the data collected. The independent variable was the data informed professional development. The dependent variable was the knowledge gained or positive relationship the data informed professional development had on the intervention group's knowledge and beliefs, operationalized by the BSEI. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if there was a difference between the bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs between the two school groups.

The findings revealed that there was a statistically significant difference ( $p < .01$ ) in bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs between the treatment and comparison groups within each school. The results provided evidence of a statistically significant improvement in teacher bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs after participating in the school specific professional development session. In the follow-up investigation the researcher found that faculty perceptions of the school as a professional learning community were parallel to their perceptions of bullying knowledge and beliefs. The more positive the respondents were about bullying knowledge and beliefs, the more positive they were about the schools as a learning community. Implications for school administrators and recommendations for future studies were addressed in chapter five.

## Acknowledgments

This study is dedicated to students of all ages. Adolescence can be such a challenging and trying time. My hope is that by providing professional development based on the current realities in your schools, environments will be created in which bullying is rare and all students can learn and feel safe. Student voice and professional learning communities are two key elements in the success of this study.

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## CHAPTER I. NATURE OF THE STUDY

### **Introduction**

“When violence enters a school, the first victim is learning” (Halford, 1996). By increasing teacher awareness and sharing perceptual differences between the teachers and the students they serve; schools can be created where bullying is rare and where all students are ready and able to learn. Because of the documented harmful effects of bullying on student achievement, educators are taking bullying seriously (San Antonio & Salzfass, 2007). Research indicates that bullying, with its accompanying fear, loss of self-efficacy, anger, and hurt, negatively affects the school environment and can greatly diminish students’ ability to engage actively in learning (Hoover & Oliver, 1996). The first step in solving a problem is awareness of the problem within the context of specific settings.

Schools should opt for a more comprehensive set of goals that address social and moral development, school and classroom climate, teacher training, school policies, and community values, along with student behavior (San Antonio & Salzfass, 2007). School officials and leaders often times think that if they haven’t had any large scale violent acts in their school then they have created a safe learning environment. That is not necessarily the case because bullying can occur in very secretive ways. Every day, students are being laughed at, taunted, intimidated, and stripped of their dignity. Many students leave school with emotional wounds that will remain with them for the rest of their lives (Williams, 2007).

Bullying knows no zip code (Phillips, 2008). Not a single identifier is immune, some bullies and victims are affluent, some are poor English-language learners and English-language speakers; they are White, Hispanic, African American, and Asian; they come from urban, suburban, and rural communities. Regardless of whom they are, where they come from, or the extent of their poverty or wealth, the reality is that many students lack the personal, social, and emotional competencies to receive the maximum benefit of a rigorous, standards-based instructional program (Elias & Arnold, 2006). It is crucial that schools attend to academic needs and the social and emotional well-being of the children they serve. This includes the bully and the victim. Each day, students arrive in classrooms around the United States with challenges and issues which can impede their learning. It is imperative that schools worldwide give children tools, both intellectual and practical, that they can bring to the classrooms, families, and communities. These skills, when conscientiously taught, help children successfully manage life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, communicating effectively, being sensitive to others' needs, and getting along with others. When schools implement a high quality teaching approach addressing social-emotional learning, academic achievement of children increases, incidence of problem behaviors decrease, the relationships that surround each child are improved, and the climate of classrooms and schools changes for the better (Elias & Arnold, 2006). It is essential that we shift our thought processes as a larger system from "dealing with individual behavior problems" to placing our finger on the pulse of the group dynamics among the peer structures within our schools. The most effective method for doing this is to begin by exploring the school's specific context and bullying data.

A capacious amount of research has been done on the topic of bullying, with an explicit focus on the dyadic relationship between the bully and the victim (Austin & Joseph, 1996;

Haynie, Nansel, & Eitel, 2001). Findings have indicated that the origin of the behavior is linked to numerous antecedents. Behavioral and theoretical models have also been used to explain the path of the behaviors or responses exhibited by the bully and the victim (Bukowski, Sippola, & Newcomb, 2000; Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003; Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999).

Bullying is defined as “a negative intentional action aimed at causing physical and/or psychological harm to one or more students who are weaker and unable to defend themselves (Olweus, 1993). Bullying can take on many forms within the school environment and the community such as verbal, physical, emotional, relational and cyber, to name a few. The fact that the “always on generation” is now immersed in adolescence has made the ability to find one safe place increasingly difficult. The effects of bullying are serious: victims may suffer emotional and academic difficulties, problems with relationships, low self esteem and may have increased susceptibility to depression and other mental ailments (Sharp, Thompson, & Arora, 2000).

Bullying has also been linked with interpersonal issues such as lack of social acceptance and difficulty making friends (Pellegrini, 2001). What many teachers and school leaders fail to realize is that bullying not only leaves a lasting impression on the bully and the victim, it is a much larger social problem that is strongly influenced by group process and social identity among peers. Bullying not only causes considerable suffering to individual pupils but has a damaging effect on the school atmosphere (Olweus, 1993). Bullying deprives children of safety and security, but prevention and intervention are all too often not part of the school curricula (Turkel, 2007). Equipping the student and teacher population with the skills they need to change the overall climate of the school is necessary to foster a profound impact on school violence and

bullying. The traditional intervention programs focus on the affected individuals, bullies and victims, but developing more systemic methods to handle school bullying demands an overall cultural shift that influences the climate of the school and diminishes the sense of fear among all stakeholders, especially the children (Phillips, Linney, & Pack, 2008; Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine if professional development, using school contextual data, would bring deeper understanding to the important issue of bullying. The researcher used pre-existing data, collected by each of the participating schools, for the purpose of school improvement, to design the professional development. The professional development was used by teachers in the public school system to inform the teachers of: 1) important knowledge related to bullying, 2) the importance of using school contextual data to drive professional development in areas such as bullying, and 3) to determine if there was a possible parallel in schools as learning communities and bullying. In a follow-up analysis, the researcher wanted to explore if teacher perceptions of bullying beliefs and knowledge were correlated with their perceptions of their school as a professional learning community.

The significance of this study is two-fold. First, the researcher hoped to improve the learning capacity of this school system by creating data informed, school specific professional development; informing practice with evidence. Second, through this research, it is the hope of the researcher to create a line of inquiry that will inform other systems and contribute to the growing body of knowledge related to bullying beliefs, prevention and intervention and how this connects to the school organization and its ability to function as a professional learning community.

## **Significance of the Study**

School bullying is widely regarded as a serious personal, social, and educational problem which affects a substantial portion of school children. School systems and organizations must recognize the seriousness of bullying in the school milieu because children who are involved in bullying conflicts, as well as all of the other students who play a particular role in this social issue, will be at risk for future maladjustment (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004). Researchers have found that when students do not have a mutually respectful, authentic relationship with their teachers, the likelihood for bullying behavior increases. Disempowered relationships with teachers consistently predicts bullying behavior (Nation, Vieno, Perkins, & Santinello, 2008).

An important but often overlooked factor that influences students' success in school is their perceptions of school safety and their feelings of "belongingness" or connectedness to others at their school (Glew, Ming-Yu, Katon, Rivara, & Kernic, 2005). Despite the importance of perceptions of a positive school climate, few studies have examined student's perceptions of safety and belongingness in relation to their status as a victim, bully, or bully/victim in school settings (O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Sawyer, 2009). As children grow into adolescence and enter middle and high school, they continue to suffer the harmful effects of bullying, harassment, and victimization at the hands of their peers. Understanding bullying, harassment, and other forms of emotional violence, begins with understanding the power of acceptance and rejection in human motivation (Garbarino & deLara, 2003).

Meeting the needs of the students we serve, while complying with local, state, and national mandates has made the art of teaching increasingly complex. Teachers must fulfill a multitude of roles, above and beyond teaching, if they are to be deemed effective in the eyes of

various stakeholders. Emphasizing the importance of creating a safe and nurturing learning environment, with a focus on bullying prevention, is a critical first step.

### **Research Questions**

The specific research questions examined for the purposes of this study were:

1. When using bullying data specific to the schools, are there gaps between student and teacher data regarding perceptions, prevalence, beliefs, prevention/intervention?
2. When using bullying data specific to the school in a professional development session, is there a difference in bullying knowledge between the teacher treatment group and the teacher comparison group?
3. When using bullying data specific to the school in a professional development session, is there a difference in bullying beliefs between the teacher treatment group and the teacher comparison group?
4. Would bullying knowledge be correlated to the teachers' perception of their school as a learning community?
5. Would bullying beliefs be correlated to the teachers' perception of their school as a learning community?

### **Background of the Study**

The objective was to determine if professional development, using school specific contextual data would improve teacher's knowledge and beliefs in regards to bullying. In addition to this, the researcher wanted to know if a follow-up survey in regards to the schools' development as a professional learning community would parallel their knowledge and beliefs about bullying.

In order to best answer the research questions, the level of knowledge and awareness specific to bullying within the individual schools selected for the study, along with the individual beliefs among teachers and students at each of the participating schools was examined. The opportunity for growth was evidenced by the gaps in the pre-existing needs assessment data between the perceptions of these two groups. Professional development, based on the bullying data of each individual school, along with the review of the literature, specifically in the area of bullying prevention and intervention, were crucial factors emphasized in the development and creation of environments that exude an intolerance of bullying.

The studies reviewed in the following chapter have examined bullying from the perspective of the students, the perspective of the teachers and the effects of bullying in a general sense on various populations within educational organizations. What makes the current study unique from previous research is that it examined the perceptual gaps between students and teachers within the participating schools and used this valuable information as a springboard to create meaningful learning and growth opportunities for the teachers. Additionally, the following review of literature suggests it is imperative to include student voice and empower our youth to assist in solving this problem. Students are too often overlooked as a resource for solving problems in schools. Many adults do not see or tap into students' power; they focus on doing things to, for, and at students rather than with them. Young people are uniquely positioned to effectively solve the problem of bullying in our schools, if given the opportunity (Phillips, Linney, & Pack, 2008).

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the school leaders to create a culture in their schools that provides a safe nurturing learning environment for the students and teachers within. This includes modeling an attitude of a continuing learner willing to engage in authentic learning

communities to address issues such as bullying. The follow-up session, including the data collected from the Indicators of Professional Learning Communities Instrument (IPLCI) also provided evidence of the current practices within each school in relation to professional learning communities.

The school system participating in this study prioritized the issue of bullying in their system-wide school improvement plan during the 2009–2011 school years. Needs assessment data (see Appendix A) was collected from October, 2010 through November, 2010. The school system had developed goals within their action plans in regards to bullying. The researcher was asked to present details of the professional development project and the Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument (BSEI) (see Appendix B) to principals and central office administrators of this system. Permission was granted at the system level and school principals invited the researcher into their schools to provide the professional development. The researcher agreed to provide professional development to this system as outreach and service to the educational community. Permission was granted (see Appendix C) for the researcher to use the preexisting needs assessment data from each school within the participating system to develop the BSEI and to design the professional development for each school. The BSEI was used to draw a comparison of teacher knowledge and beliefs about bullying between the randomly assigned treatment and comparison groups. Those surveyed in this study consisted of the teachers employed at the participating schools. Within each of the five participating schools, teachers were randomly assigned to the treatment group or comparison group. The treatment group received the professional development and then completed the BSEI. The comparison group was administered the BSEI prior to receiving the professional development; treatment was delayed.

### **Assumptions and Limitations of the Study**

1. It is assumed that the sample studied was representative of the total population of teachers employed in [INSERT STATE NAME].
2. It is assumed that responses received from the participating teachers accurately reflected their professional opinions.
3. It is assumed that participants in this study answered all of the Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument questions openly and honestly.
4. It is assumed that scores on the dependent variable, bullying knowledge, will be normally distributed in the population for both groups of teachers, i.e. comparison and treatment.
5. It is assumed that scores on the dependent variable, bullying beliefs, will be normally distributed in the population for both groups of teachers, i.e. comparison and treatment.
6. It is assumed that teachers randomly assigned to the treatment group will have gained more knowledge than the teachers assigned to the comparison group reflected on the BSEI.
7. It is assumed that teachers randomly assigned to the treatment group will have increased their positively held beliefs regarding bullying than the teachers assigned to the comparison group reflected on the BSEI.

A study limitation is that due to the fact that the study was conducted in one rural school system in [INSERT STATE NAME], the study cannot be generalized to other school systems in other states. Additionally, due to the unique configuration of the participating schools, this may have affected the data on the student and teacher needs assessments.

### **Definitions and Terms**

**Bully** – an individual who exhibits a pattern of intentional negative acts towards one or more individuals for a variety of reasons (Coloroso, 2008).

**Bullying** – when someone is exposed, repeatedly over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more individuals; bullying is a negative intentional action aimed at causing physical and/or psychological harm to one or more individuals who are weaker and unable to defend themselves (Olweus, 2001).

**Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument (BSEI)** – the instrument developed by the researcher in this study to answer research questions two and three.

**Bully-victim** – individuals who exhibit characteristics of both a bully and a victim (Coloroso, 2008).

**Bystander** – individuals who have not had a direct involvement in bullying behavior but may be actively or passively involved (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009).

**Indicators of Professional Learning Communities Instrument (IPLCI)** – the instrument developed by the researcher to measure the results of the follow-up session of professional development in this current study.

**Professional Learning Community** – an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010).

**Student Voice** – giving students opportunities to be involved in the decision making efforts at their schools as well as the school improvement initiatives (Mitra, 2005).

**Teacher** – for the purposes of this study, the term ‘teacher’ was used to define all instructional staff members within a specific school.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of literature in the areas of bullying, data driven professional development, and professional learning communities. The purpose of this study

was to determine if professional development, using school contextual data, would bring deeper understanding to the important issue of bullying. The remainder of this study is organized into five chapters, bibliography, and appendixes in the following manner. Chapter Two presents a review of the related literature specific to bullying prevalence, knowledge, beliefs and the connections between the core elements of a professional learning community and bullying prevention and intervention, including student voice. Chapter Three delineates the research design and methodology of the study. The instruments used to gather the data, the procedures followed, and determination of the sample selected for the study is described. An analysis of the data and discussion of the findings are presented in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. The study concludes with the bibliography and appendixes.

## CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The major phases of this study were framed by the review of literature. First, the researcher was interested in using stakeholder voices, an element associated with “best practices” of professional development. The most meaningful professional development is often inspired by these stakeholders and research supported the use of their voices (Guskey, 2000; Guskey & Sparks, 2002; Joyce & Showers, 2002). The stakeholders included in the study were students and teachers. To this end, the researcher designed the professional development using the latest knowledge in regards to bullying characteristics, definitions, beliefs and prevalence and then asked teachers and students for their perceptions in regards to their individual schools.

Secondly, there is a growing body of research pointing to the essential nature of including a school’s data to build understanding of present reality and future progress (Bernhardt, 2004; Earl & Timperley, 2009; Kowalski, 2009). “Data by themselves are not evidence of anything, until users of the data bring concepts, criteria, theories of action, and interpretive frames of reference to the task of making sense of the data” (Knapp, Swinnerton, Copland, & Monpas-Huber, 2006, p. 10). In other words, schools need to know where they are to get where they want to be (Means, et al., 2009). For the present study bullying professional development sessions were designed to include the perceptual gaps and similarities reported by these two stakeholder groups in each of the schools.

Thirdly, the researcher examined the complex nature of bullying and found knowledge and beliefs of bullying as well as prevention strategies to be important areas of concern for

school personnel. Teachers and administrators can be at a loss in even knowing appropriate definitions and types. Teachers and administrators may believe certain ways in regards to bullying but the student may have different beliefs (Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001). Prevention can also be elusive and reactive.

Finally, research indicated that professional learning communities (PLCs) could be instrumental in addressing issues like bullying because strong learning communities are responsive to professional development, stakeholder voice, data informed decision making and building a community of learners within the school. Accordingly, Hord and Sommers (2008) present five core attributes: shared beliefs and vision, shared and supportive leadership, collective learning, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice (p. 9) as the critical elements of the professional learning community. At the center of all this activity is student learning (Hord & Sommers, 2008) and how school leadership and faculties can make positive changes to encourage this learning atmosphere. Schools which address important contextual impediments to learning, such as bullying, are likely to resemble these professional learning communities and are likely to include students as the most important stakeholders (Kowalski, 2009). Strong PLC schools would not be willing to allow bullying to interfere with the learning in their school. Learning for the professional becomes a habit of mind and not an added responsibility (Hord, 2009).

A vital component of professional learning communities is including the voice of stakeholders. This includes the student voice. This would be of particular importance in matters of school safety and student bullying. The value of student voice and student empowerment is too often overlooked when addressing issues such as bullying. When students are seen as resources and given opportunities to be contributors, the degree of positive connectedness to the

school increases significantly (Phillips, et al., 2008). Effective prevention strategies are many times dependent on the involvement of students. Students should not be spectators who let education happen to them. School is about the students; their participation is nonnegotiable (Beaudoin, 2005).

The conceptual framework is a synthesis of the literature and represents the connections of professional development, data driven decision making, professional learning communities and bullying knowledge, and bullying beliefs (Figure 1).

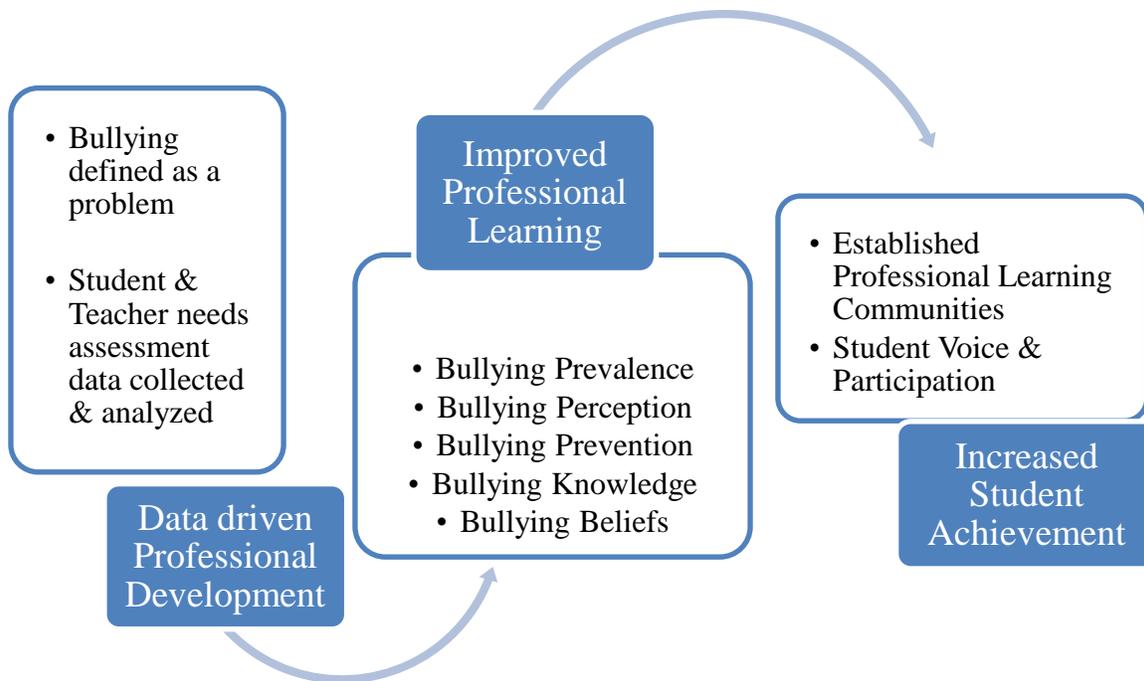


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Current Study

## Bullying

### Bullying Characteristics

Dan Olweus is considered the pioneer in bullying research. His definition states, “A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students” (Olweus, 2001, pp. 5–6). Many researchers

have framed bullying as a subset of aggressive behavior (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009). Bullying has been carried out through physical contact, with words, or in more indirect ways, such as making faces or gestures, spreading rumors or intentionally excluding others (Olweus, 2003). Bullying has also entailed an imbalance of power, meaning that students exposed to negative actions have had difficulty defending themselves against the physically or psychologically stronger bully. An imbalance of power can exist due to the physical size of the bully or victim, a difference in status, or support of a peer group (Cooper & Snell, 2003). Misconceptions about the bully have included that the bully was physically large, a low achiever and/or insecure. In actuality the bully has come in many shapes and sizes. Olweus (2003) summarized that “Bullies are children who value rewards that aggression can bring.” Bullies lack empathy for their victims and believe the victims provoked the attack and deserved the consequence. Bullies like to be in charge, to assert power, and to dominate (Olweus, 1993).

From the literature additional definitions of bullying were found.

- Bullying is repeated delivery of aversive stimuli to weaker, less powerful persons’. It takes on many forms, including physical, verbal and relational aggression (Nesdale & Scarlett, 2004).
- Bullying is a conscious, willful, repeated and deliberately hostile act intended to inflict pain, discomfort, embarrassment, and/or induce fear through violence or humiliation (Williams, 2007).
- Bullying is defined as the combination of three primary characteristics. Harm is done. The act is repeated. There is an unfair match of participants. This combination differentiates bullying from other forms of play, teasing or fighting (Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001).

In a study conducted by Solberg, Olweus, and Endresen (2007), the explanation of bullying on their student questionnaire included saying mean and hurtful things, completely ignoring or excluding one from the group on purpose, hitting, kicking, pushing, or threatening, and spreading rumors or saying unkind things about another individual.

Bullying can occur in many forms such as: verbal, physical, relational, and cyber (Coloroso, 2008; Olweus, 2003; Swearer, et al., 2009; Williams, 2007). Bullying incidents can include one or more of these forms at any given time. Verbal bullying can include teasing, ridicule, name-calling, threats, rumors, racial slurs, criticism, and blackmailing. Physical bullying can include hitting, tripping, pushing, and spitting, among other forms of physical contact that are not welcomed or enjoyed. Relational bullying includes social isolation, exclusion from a group, and leaving someone out intentionally, as well as rumor spreading. Relational bullying is much more common among females and due to the indirect nature of the incidents, is often times harder to identify and intervene for adults.

Cyber-bullying is the use of cell phones or other forms of technology, such as the internet, to harass, intimidate, embarrass, or humiliate another person. Cyber-bullying has added an increasingly dangerous dimension of anonymity to the bullying phenomena (McQuade, Colt, & Meyer, 2009). Victims of cyber-bullying enter school each day with the anxiety of the unknown. With direct forms of bullying, the victim most likely knows exactly who the bully is. In the cyber world, the victim begins to assume that any one of their peers could very likely be the bully.

Bullying incidents usually last less than 15 seconds and over half are over within 34 seconds. Every seven minutes a student is bullied on the playground with an adult intervening

only 4% of the time. There is peer prevention 11% of the time, but unfortunately, there is no prevention efforts 85% of the time (Williams, 2007).

Swearer et al. (2009) stated eight facts regarding bullying and victimization that need to be acknowledged:

1. Bullying and victimization involves mean, repeated, aggressive behaviors.
2. All forms of bullying and victimization are damaging.
3. All individuals have the capacity to engage in bullying/victimization if the environment supports these behaviors.
4. Anti-bullying policies are a critical foundation for promoting an environment that does not support bullying and victimization.
5. Bullying and victimization is not a part of any developmental stage.
6. Bullying and victimization can be stopped when individuals choose to not engage in these behaviors.
7. Effective bullying prevention can be as simple as choosing to model healthy social relationships.
8. Evaluation of bullying prevention is an ongoing effort that can be easily coordinated across the curriculum in any school.

Children can be categorized in one of the many roles involved in the complex structure of a bullying environment; bully, victim, bully-victim, and the bystander. It is important to note that children do not always remain fixated in only one of these roles. It is common for them to move in and out of these roles depending on a variety of circumstances, their present surroundings and who they are interacting with at any given moment (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Salmivalli, 1999; Swearer, et al., 2009).

Bullies tend to be perceived as popular by both other students and teachers (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003). Bullies also tend to feel more comfortable in the social environment of school than either victims or bully victims (Cunningham, 2007). According to this study, bullies scored higher than victims and bully-victims in the area of attachment; meaning they feel safe at school, they feel they belong to the school, and that they are cared about at their school (p. 473). This may make it more difficult to catch them in the act or hold them accountable for their negative actions because they have already done an effective job of winning the crowd over in social settings and situations. Additionally, bullies tend to have a superior theory of mind, which makes it easy for them to identify and then target vulnerable students, or potential victims, and then tap in to sensitive issues unique to those individuals (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999a). Theory of mind is the ability to understand that there can be two different realities and be able to manipulate them; in other words, be able to consider the feelings of others or take their perspective (Swearer, et al., 2009).

In early adolescence, bullies enjoy the social prestige that they receive from their peers, making it unlikely for bullies to feel depressed, anxious, or lonely due to their high social status. Important to note is the fact that despite bullies' high social status among their peers, classmates would rather not spend time with them. This supports the assumption that their social prestige is motivated out of fear and not authentic acceptance and admiration (Juvonen, et al., 2003). In an effort to remain out of the line of a bullies' fire, peers will engage in a surface level relationship, merely to protect their own safety and well-being. Relative to punishment or consequences for bullying behavior, punishment is a less effective way for dealing with bullying. Instead, a proactive approach must be taken to teach relationship enhancement skills instead of ostracizing bullies for their lack of skills (Swearer, et al., 2009).

Bully-victims appear to struggle the most with friendship issues and in social situations. Bully-victims are at greatest risk for problems because they exhibit both the externalizing characteristics of bullies and the internalizing factors of victims. Bully-victims' high level of social avoidance, conduct problems, and school difficulties suggest that they are in a particularly high risk group. Victims of bullying who also bully others are at greatest risk of becoming serious violent offenders (Juvonen, et al., 2003). While these sub-groups were not identified for the purpose of the present study, the impact of the bullying lifestyle can have ramifications for the greater good.

Victims of bullying have been classified into two distinct groups: provocative and passive victims (Olweus, 2001). Provocative victims have appeared to bring bullying on themselves. They have enticed the bully and have been viewed as getting what they deserve. The majority of victims have been classified as passive victims who did nothing to call attention to them. Because the perception has been that most victims are provocative, school personnel have wasted valuable time trying to determine what the victims did to deserve this when coexisting was their only fault. If more time was spent eradicating the bullying behavior, school environments would be more conducive to learning and creating a sense of belonging for all.

Children who have been victims of bullying tended to show the highest levels of depression and anxiety, as well as feelings of insecurity and loneliness. School personnel have often times been guilty of addressing bullying events as peer conflict. Bullying has always been a single-sided act of proactive aggression towards an individual or group that could never be resolved solely by mediating between the bully and victim. Students who have been victimized have had poor relationships with their peers which further increased the likelihood of rejection and victimization (O'Brennan, et al., 2009). Findings from this study examined the perspectives

of peer groups and emphasized the importance of understanding the social plight of the victim. Victims have always been targeted by bullies and ostracized by many of their classmates because their heightened anxiety level and signs of distress make them harder to accept into a social group. Many peers have struggled internally, knowing that a student has been isolated or excluded, but the power and influence of a peer, as well as the need to have been accepted, have often times been stronger than the desire to do what is morally or ethically correct (O'Brennan, et al., 2009). In light of this added stress, when victims have known their teacher and other adults at school have cared about them and their welfare, believed in them when they have reported incidents of bullying, and have worked to prevent further bullying behaviors from occurring, they have developed a more secure sense that someone has helped them; ultimately, a relationship of trust and confidence has developed (Phillips, et al., 2008).

Another very important group of participants along the bullying continuum is the bystander. These students are the ones that have not been directly involved as a bully or a victim. Bystanders can have a passive or active involvement in bullying situations and have experienced problematic consequences from the abuse of others. Bystanders have been considered any student that has witnessed bullying or mistreatment, whether they have watched it and said nothing or they encouraged it by making comments to the bully or the victim (Phillips, et al. 2008).

Additionally, bystanders have the potential to act as a major force or change agent in reducing or eliminating bullying behavior in schools, if given the necessary tools to do so. Phillips et al. (2008) stated that bystanders have a two-fold effect on the dynamic of bullying. The absence of protest from the bystanders has given immediate tacit consent to each individual act of bullying and has perpetuated a perceived norm that it is cool to be a bully. The following

section of the literature review examines the perception of both students and staff, including how increased awareness can change their perception and ultimately influence the prevalence in school buildings.

### **Perception and Prevalence**

Raising awareness about bullying prevalence and stakeholder perception is a crucial step in the efforts to reduce bullying. Approximately 30% of American students have been involved in bullying as bullies, victims, or bully-victims, and have suffered adverse consequences as a result of this involvement (Nansel, et al., 2001). The impact that bullying can have on a student can affect their academic abilities, their social and emotional relationships and their overall ability to develop into a productive, functioning member of society. A more recent study by Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan (2007) examined bullying among a population of more than 15, 000 elementary, middle and high school students, and found that approximately 41% of the students were frequently involved in bullying, with 23% as the victim, 8% as the bully, and 9% as the bully-victim. The prevalence of frequent involvement in bullying tends to increase in late elementary school, peak during middle school and decline in high school (Olweus, 2001). This lends merit to the unique design of the present study's focus on one system and the multiple levels of schools within.

Haddow (2006) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY 97) to examine the effect of repeated bullying on adolescent functioning. Data was collected from 4807 youth between the ages of 12 and 14. Nineteen percent of the students reported that they had been the victims of repeated violent episodes of bullying. The students that identified themselves as victims on the Likert style questionnaire also identified problems in areas that their non-bullied peers did not struggle with. Some of these areas were: unhappiness, cheating,

difficulty sleeping, academic struggles, feeling unsafe, and an increase in behavior problems at school, specifically in the area of fighting. The generalized findings were that victims of bullying before the age of twelve were much less successful in approaching a variety of other areas of their lives, lending support to the goals of the current study and the urgency of beginning to address bullying at the elementary school level.

In one study that examined adolescent perception of bullying, the most common reason reported as to why individuals were bullied was because of a difference in their physical appearance in comparison with their peers (Frise`en, Jonsson, & Persson, 2007). Additionally, when the students in this study responded to the question regarding what makes bullying stop, the two most frequent responses were 1) the bully matures, and 2) the victim stood up for himself/herself . Victims self-identified in the Frise´n et al. (2007) study considered themselves less attractive than the other students. The most troubling data in the findings of this study was that only 14% of students gave the response of adult prevention as the reason behind bullying cessation. This seemed to be a common theme through other studies reviewed in the bullying literature (Andreou, 2001; Cassidy, 2009; Cooper & Snell, 2003; Garbarino & deLara, 2003; Nansel et al., 2001).

Students are hesitant to report bullying because past experience has not resulted in favorable ways. Adults either failed to address it at all or the manner in which they addressed it was ineffective or created other issues. Froschl and Gropper (1999) reported that 71% of the observed bullying incidents were either ignored or adults were not aware of the problems. There are a variety of reasons that teachers and school staff fail to intervene in bullying behavior. They may be unaware, they may want to discourage tattling, they may want students to work it out on

their own, or they may believe these actions are a natural part of development (Cooper & Snell, 2003; Froschl & Gropper, 1999).

Black and Jackson (2007) studied bullying among elementary and middle school students. They collected data to identify the highest risk groups of students and the effectiveness of specific program implementation within six large schools. The researchers found, among other things, that factors associated with increased bullying incidence were attitudes of school staff regarding bullying. Students are keenly aware of the authenticity of teachers' actions and responses to particular events during their school day. The importance for all students to form meaningful relationships with their peers and their teachers or adult role models cannot be overstated. When teachers or staff members do not validate a child's concern or need relative to a bullying event; students will begin to question their role in the incident and ultimately their self worth. Additionally, inconsistencies in the reactions of adults can further confuse the youth involved.

Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, and Ruan (2004) looked at the relationship between bullying and adjustment across twenty-five countries to see if there were similarities in prevalence of a problem as well as perception from students on the impact bullying has had on their development and their ability to cope. While the range of involvement and reported cases varied drastically among countries, almost all of the countries reported poorer health among bullies, victims and bully-victims as well as increased difficulty in emotional and social adjustment, relationships with peers, alcohol and drug use and weapon possession cases (Nansel, et al., 2004). Bullying is a critical issue when considering the ability to develop relationships with peers and contributing productively within schools and other organizations. The adult or

professional response to the problem of bullying will determine the social and emotional safety of our children.

### **Social Complexity of Bullying**

Current research reveals that bullying, no longer viewed simply as a dyadic interaction between a perpetrator and victim, is increasingly situated within the larger social systems like peer groups, families, and schools (Craig, et al., 2000; Salmivalli, 1999). Bullying should be viewed as a collective social problem, not just involving the bully and the victim. All students and adults in a school building participate either knowingly or unknowingly, as not one person can be or should be excluded from the systemic structure of bullying (Swearer, et al., 2009).

Olweus (1993) further differentiated between bullies, passive bullies, passive-submissive victims, and provocative victims within the systemic structure. Bullying is a group process that involves and is enabled by many players in addition to the individual bullies and victims. Bullying usually occurs in the presence of peers who can adopt a variety of roles, such as remaining neutral, assisting or encouraging the bully, or aiding or consoling the victim (Smith, Schneider, Smith & Ananiadou, 2004).

The social processes underlying bullying are not, however, the exclusive domain of children. Adults in the immediate environment have a direct effect on the bullying process. Their action or lack of response to any given situation sets the tone for the environment that the bullying is taking place. The group process associated with bullying bolsters the argument for a systemic approach to its correction. “The whole school approach to prevention efforts is predicated on the assumption that bullying is a systemic problem, and by implication, an prevention must be directed at the entire school context rather than just at individual bullies and victims” (Smith, Schneider, Smith & Ananiadou, 2004, p. 548). The manner in which bullying

as a systemic problem is addressed has dire consequences on the outcome. If responsibility is taken by all student stakeholders, regardless of their placement on the bullying continuum, it encourages ownership and commitment by all individuals within the organization. The momentum of this ownership must be nurtured and fueled by the encouragement and support of the adult role models within the school context.

Schools are complex, intricately diverse organizational systems that bring a variety of groups together. Stakeholders within the school organization include students, teachers, para-professionals, mental health personnel and counselors, nurses, administrators, parents and community members. Each individual within the structure has a unique perspective on the problem of bullying within their individual schools, including the prevalence of the problem and their suggestions for addressing the problem. Benbenishty and Astor (2008) found that the discrepancies in self-reports of school violence and bullying rates among students, teachers, and administrators were greatest in schools that had higher rates of victimization. Understanding the prevalence of specific forms of bullying within a school district or at an individual school site has implications for both science and prevention research. Bullying interferes with the learning environment for all students and staff. Students cannot succeed academically if basic needs for safety are not being met. If efforts are put into place to positively address school climate issues, it not only enhances school safety but sets the stage for effective learning and success (Phillips et al., 2008).

Holt and Espelage (2007) examined differences in perceived peer and maternal social support across bully/victim subtypes and the extent to which the support minimized their role in one of the four categories of bullying behavior; bully, victim, bully-victim, and bystander. In the middle school years, the value and dependence on social support peaks, becoming less of a

necessity in older adolescents. In consideration of self-esteem, the study found the amount of peer social support to be directly related to the amount of self-esteem held by an adolescent. The study sampled 784 ethnically and socially diverse youth from the middle and high school levels. The instruments used consisted of demographic information as well as a bully scale indicator, victimization scale indicator, and anxiety/depression scale, and a support scale.

The study looked at several variable groupings when investigating the level of social support. Initially, they considered gender, age, and race or ethnicity individually with each subgroup of bullying behavior. Additionally, the researchers looked at the psychological state or well-being of the participants and the impact that the support had on minimizing depression, anger, and anxiety, as well as other categories.

Their findings were that females reported more peer social support than males, although they did not report more maternal support. White students tended to report somewhat more peer social support, and somewhat less maternal social support, than non-White students. Bystanders and uninvolved students reported greater perceived peer social support from their mothers and friends than victims and bully-victims, and greater maternal social support than victims. (Holt & Espelage, 2007, pp. 991)

The one caution from these results was that bullies who perceived positive social support from their peers, which would not be surprising as their group norm would be bullying type behavior, would most likely nurture and prolong the behavior. The results from this study imply the need for prevention programs that focus on group dynamics and social responses to bullying behavior based on the powerful influence peer support has on attitudes and actions throughout adolescent years.

A second study by Espelage and Holt (2001) “found considerable gaps in the role that peers play in promoting bullying and victimization by either reinforcing the aggressor, failing to intervene to stop the victimization, or affiliating with students who bully” (Espelage & Holt, 2001, p. 125). The study looked at the amount of bullying occurring across grade levels and gender; the connection between popularity or perceived popularity across grade levels and gender; social identity between bullies and those like them; and the psychosocial differences between the various social groups, particularly the bullies and the victims. The study participants were 422 middle school students in grades six through eight. The survey instrument used Likert-scale measures on bullying/aggression and victimization items. The findings of this study were that bullies and non-bullies have just as many friends. A significant finding was bullying among 6<sup>th</sup> grade males was associated with popularity; this relationship was not as strong in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. This indicates that bullying becomes less popular and acceptable by peer groups later in the middle school years and into high school. Conversely, the pressure and desire to be accepted by peers during the early middle years of adolescence is often times so great that the knowledge and desire to exhibit appropriate behavior and conform to normative expectations becomes less important than the need to belong.

In a 2003 study, Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster studied the perspective of individuals, peers and teachers. A unique aspect of this study was that it used peer nomination methodology, which allowed the sample of 1,985 students to provide a confidential report as to which classmates bully others and which are victims of bullying. While this methodology differs from the current study, the findings underscore the importance of addressing bullying as a systemic problem that involves the peer group as a whole (Juvonen, et al., 2003). This study also emphasized the importance of seeking the perspective of various individuals within the

organization; while the instruments selected did not measure gaps in perception, perceptions were measured, nonetheless. School climates must be monitored closely. The entire climate of a school can be affected by bullying behaviors if they go unchecked. Threats and intimidation associated with bully behaviors can create a negative atmosphere for all students (Hoover & Oliver, 1996). Students cannot work, learn, or thrive in an environment where they do not feel safe (Williams, 2007).

The beliefs that students and staff members hold relative to student interaction and peer group relations affects how they instigate or respond to acts of bullying. While it may not be reasonable for every person in a building to hold the same beliefs, it is important to understand the beliefs of others and how these beliefs influence actions. The following section of the literature review will look at how the beliefs of various stakeholders can influence the prevalence of bullying in schools.

### **Bullying Beliefs**

The values, beliefs, and practices that influence bullying in schools are attributed to multiple stakeholders: the community, family, organizational factors, school staff, and students (Phillips, 2008). The value that a community places on education can have a profound influence on the climate of a school. Resources and programs available to the youth within the community as well as the general treatment of the youth within the community by adults interacting with them can influence the priority bullying prevention efforts are given. Children who bully often come from homes where aggression is the approved problem solving method and children are encouraged to fight back when engaged in conflicts. Conversely, children that live in a warm loving environment, in which limits have been set and discipline is consistent and non-physical,

greatly minimizes their risk for involvement in bullying or victimization (Orpinas & Home, 2006).

School and organizational values, beliefs and practices also influence bullying. Established policies can set the tone for the priority given to bullying behaviors and the response of authority to bullying incidents. Additionally, the opportunities given to employees within the system to participate in the decision making process specific to bullying prevention efforts can also be influenced by long held organizational beliefs. Lastly, the values and beliefs of the school staff, including the administrators, are demonstrated in the way they interact with one another and with their students, specifically the priority they place on building and strengthening relationships with each other with the mutual goal of creating a safe, nurturing environment conducive for learning.

Yoon (2004) considered the perceived seriousness of bullying by teachers, the level of empathy that teachers had towards victims, and self efficacy in behavioral management in relation to how students perceived these same dimensions. The behavior of the teachers had a strong impact on the student's ability to handle episodes of bullying. The teacher is instrumental in establishing a climate of trust, mutual respect and care within their classroom and if students do not feel that they can trust their teacher and form a relationship with them, then all other interactions that take place will not be authentic to the child.

In a 2007 study, students identified as being in all three of the categories—bullies, victims and bully-victims—reportedly viewed adults in the school as more tolerant of bullying and less likely to intervene during bullying incidents than students who were not identified as bullies, victims, or bully-victims (Cunningham). Perceptions by these sub-groups regarding adults' willingness to intervene in bullying provides the bully with a false sense of belonging and

approval and can not only prolong and exacerbate the problem, but can cause students within these other groups to rethink their affiliation. While Cunningham (2007) examined perception issues, he looked primarily at the students' perception and beliefs regarding the adults, unlike this study that compared students' perception to staff' perception. There are a variety of ways to measure bullying prevalence in schools, but it is the belief of the researcher that using a school specific context to measure the unique needs of participating schools will assist in more effectively designing and delivering professional development and ongoing support conducive to the needs of the individual schools.

### **Bullying Prevention: Methods and Techniques**

Juvonen et al. (2003) suggested that effective school-wide anti-bullying programs aim to change the peer dynamics that encourage and maintain bullying by raising awareness of how bystanders contribute to the problem of bullying. These programs may include role playing and perspective taking that will help depict the inadvertent ways in which a bystander's behavior actually encourages the bullying. Heightening awareness in this area will equip students with various methods to intervene in bullying situations while not compromising their status or sense of involvement into the detailed structure of their peer groups.

Phillips et al. (2008) determined five overarching reasons that students do not get involved or stop bullying:

1. They fear retaliation.
2. They do not know what to do or say.
3. They are afraid of making the situation worse.
4. They are worried about losing social status, being labeled a snitch and becoming an object of ridicule themselves.

5. They doubt that adults will believe them or that adults will handle the notification well.

Another angle taken in recent studies has been the study of school leaders and their perception and practices of school bullying prevention activities and barriers they may identify that would impede the corrective efforts. Dake, Price, Telljohann, and Funk (2004) developed a survey and sent it to 700 school principals nationwide; 55% of the surveys were returned. While principals did not see any barriers to implementing prevention programs, only one in five of the schools represented in the data were using curriculum and programs to address and increase awareness of bullying. In this study, the activity perceived as the most effective was contacting the parent of the bully after the bullying incident had occurred (Dake, Price, Telljohann, & Funk, 2004), a very reactive approach to the problem. In this same study, the activity perceived as least effective was holding a school conference day for students, parents, and community members to raise awareness of bullying prevention issues. Principals who participated perceived the extent of bullying in their own school to be less than the extent in other schools in the United States, in general, indicating that school leaders are poorly informed regarding the prevalence of bullying in their own schools (Dake, et al., 2004). Dake et al. (2004) stated, “From a purely litigious aspect, it would benefit school leaders to take a proactive approach to reducing bullying rather than a reactive approach” (p. 385). Denying that bullying is a problem in their schools, tacitly condoning it or framing bullying events as a rite of passage will not be legally defensible. Heightened awareness and increase in tragic bullying events nationwide will continue to validate parental rights to fight for a safe, nurturing learning environment for their children.

Effective bullying prevention is not about buying the right program; it is about changing social relationships so that they are healthy and not dysfunctional. Beginning at the primary

school level, adults must model these relationships and educate the students as to the appropriate and respectful ways to interact with their peers. School districts, parents and communities have searched for the magic bullet in their efforts to eradicate bullying behaviors from their respective schools. Often times, money is spent on new programs that promise to create nirvana within one school year, only to be placed on a shelf by late spring. Programs that do not effectively change the school environment where the bullying is occurring may only be ephemeral (Haddow, 2006). The key to sustainable change is to be able to recognize and intervene early. Borg (1998) found that elementary school bullies felt regret for the event taking place while secondary bullies felt indifferent or even satisfied that the event had occurred. Therefore, a victim's impact statement is more effective at influencing the bully's moral development and cessation of victimization in the elementary school child than in an older child thus creating a sense of urgency to act.

In a more recent study, findings were similar. Borg and Gini (2006) studied bullying as a social process. The first aim of the study was to examine the perception of bullying on group members: study participants own group and other groups. A second aim was to analyze the effect of adult presence during bullying episodes. Thirdly, the study looked at the possibility of gender differences and attitudes toward bullying. A three-part anonymous survey was used to test the hypotheses. The first part was demographic information, the second part included several short stories detailing bullying episodes; students responded to questions about their reactions. The third part focused on teacher likeability and how the level of likeability would influence student's actions during bullying events. The study findings revealed that most children generally disapprove of bullies and sympathize with victims; as children grow older into preadolescence, their attitudes seem to tilt towards the pro-bullying direction. Also worth noting is that social power and group status can be seen as two of the main motives to bullying and

victimization (Gini, 2006). The power of the group and the need to belong are so influential in decisions that students make that despite knowing that bullying behavior is wrong, many times students will engage in the behavior or at minimum, condone it, in order to remain in the group and not become the next target.

Recommendations based on a study completed by Espelage, Bosworth, and Simon (2000) suggested that current prevention efforts should be modified to focus beyond individual behavior change and include assessment of the socio-cultural factors that may be contributing to and maintaining bullying behavior. Additionally, research that refrains from categorizing students as bullies can help cultivate sustainable change in bullying prevention and awareness efforts (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000). The categorization of students into groups can only be helpful if the study is solution driven and intends to use the results to inform best practices.

Olweus (2001) reported that bullying behaviors can be changed when a systems approach is applied to the issue. Bullying can no longer be viewed as a dyadic relationship between the bully and the victim. Bullying is not an individual issue; everyone is affected by bullying behavior. Most importantly, learning is sacrificed when any level of bullying prevalence exists in a school. Peterson and Skiba (2001) see the need for a multi-dimensional approach to preventing school bullying and advocate for a change in the school climate. Increasing parent-school involvement, community involvement, parent education, teacher education, and student education are good starting points for reducing bullying in schools. To best eradicate the problem of bullying, a system-wide approach needs to be instituted in the childhood years so that it does not continue to harm the development of the child later into adolescence and into adult life (Haddow, 2006).

Schools with high levels of bullying problems often lack a plan to address the overall school social climate, and rely heavily on punitive or coercive discipline strategies (Fonagy, Twemlow, Vernberg, Sacco, & Little, 2005). Bullying deprives children of safety and security, but prevention is all too often not part of the school curricula (Turler, 2007). Often times, the reality is that schools are under pressure to achieve higher test scores and outside programs or prescribed curriculums compete with instructional time in other academic areas. Equipping the student population with the skills they need to change the overall climate of the school is necessary to foster a profound impact on school violence and bullying.

The traditional prevention programs focus on the affected individuals—bullies and victims—but developing more effective methods to handle bullying and school violence demands an overall school standard that influences the climate of the school and diminishes the sense of fear. Essentially, when adults fail to intervene in bullying incidences, they are failing to see bullying as the responsibility of the larger system and are inadvertently delegating some of their authority to the bullies within the schools. Prevention efforts must be infused throughout the daily operation of the school environment and must not be a program tacked on to existing course work or curriculum matter.

As previously mentioned, youth do not typically get involved or intervene in bullying situations for a number of reasons already mentioned. In the development of a bullying prevention program, it is up to the adults in the school to create an environment in which students feel that intervening is safe. Additionally, parents play an important role in diminishing the power of peers by talking to their children about their involvement and the roles they play in bullying others. Teachers can also minimize and control much of the bullying behavior at the

classroom level by establishing a classroom community or climate that all students take ownership in.

In contrast to current beliefs and practices, Olweus (1993) reported in his earlier work that teachers could arrange meetings with the victim, bully, and both sets of parents to discuss the bullying and create a plan to solve the issue. This contradicts the present notion that bullying should never be framed as a peer conflict problem that can be fixed with mediation. Peer conflict involves equal power and mutual responsibility in which both parties are at fault. Bullying must be framed as a proactive act of aggression from one individual to another, most often without any provocation from the victim. Attempts at mediation and problem solving can place false blame on the victim and encourages increased victimization.

Awareness building of students and other stakeholders is one of the first steps necessary to create change regarding bullying prevention. In addition to increasing informational knowledge in this area, emotional awareness is a critical first step. Emotional awareness motivates people to give close attention and take personal responsibility for their actions. Unfortunately, emotional awareness is an area that adults are hesitant to invoke because it is harder to predict or control the reactions of youth to personalized, created experiences (Hazler & Carney, 2002). Raised emotional awareness establishes a foundation of commitment to the problem, which can be followed with the informational awareness to provide realistic hope of finding answers within themselves and the people around them. Attaching emotional meaning to the context of bullying, either by sharing personal experiences within or making connections to past experiences, will help in driving home the seriousness of bullying in the social context.

Building the collective capacity of the school staff with the inclusion of student voice is a relatively new vision of professional development. Traditionally, the individual classroom has

been the focus of school improvement efforts at the school level where learning occurs away from the school. The best professional development occurs in the context of the workplace rather than at a workshop, as teachers work together to address the issues and challenges that are relevant to them (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005). Professional development is directly and purposefully designed to help educators accomplish the collective goals of their team and school rather than having individuals pursue their personal interests and agendas. Until the conceptual model that guides professional development of a staff becomes teams of teachers working together, along with other stakeholders such as students, in the context of their school, schools will have difficulty becoming a professional learning community (DuFour, et al., 2005).

Additionally, students need to be taught how to engage in empathetic understanding. This is the development of a more personalized understanding of the thoughts and actions of people and life situations different from one's own. Empathetic understanding allows people to select group and individual actions that have a better fit for the whole situation rather than only for the situation as seen from one's limited view of others (Hazler & Carney, 2002). "Emerging research has shown that peers play an integral role in supporting and maintaining bullying, victimization and perpetration in our schools" (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009, p. 17). Adolescents are influenced both positively and negatively by their peer groups, more so at this age than any other time. Children learn to bully from their peers but even more powerful, they can learn to take a stand against those who bully and help create an atmosphere of intolerance. Similar to friendship groups at different ages, children move in and out of the various bullying roles based on the context of current relationships with which they are engaged.

Gifford-Smith, Dodge, Dishion, and McCord (2005) investigated the role that peer relations, with children who display deviant behavior, plays on one's own ability and propensity

to develop deviance. Findings suggested that because of the power of group identity and acceptance, if one group member engaged in negative, problem behavior the likelihood that other members would too was very strong. Depending on the age that deviancy began, the effect it had on study participants development of similar behaviors varied. The importance of this study on the present review of literature was to stress to leaders and policy makers that many of our current actions and programs are designed to group deviant children with each other. While budgets and systems may drive decision making in this area, it is crucial to consider the negative effect our actions are having on the children we are trying to rehabilitate.

In a similar study, Cassidy (2009) examined the role of social identity within the context of bullying. Nineteen percent of his sample self-identified as victims. Additionally, the suggested relationship with social identity was supported with victims having a significantly poorer sense of identification with a core group of friends. Because it is well known that victims of bullying suffer in silence and keep their pain to themselves, awareness and prevention training must be a priority. In addition, student awareness and prevention training needs to be done in the context of the group to mirror the reality of the social setting in which these incidents are more likely to occur.

In an effort to return the focus of this study on an outcomes oriented approach to addressing bullying, a single study from a different angle was reviewed. Orpinas, Horne, and Staniszewski (2003) developed a bullying prevention program in a large elementary school. The program included modification of the school environment, education of the students and professional development of the staff. The program effectiveness was measured using survey results from the spring of 1998 and spring of 1999. The results were overwhelming. The younger children reported that there was a 40% reduction on self-reported aggression and a 19%

reduction in victimization. Children in third through fifth grade reported a 23% reduction of victimization but no change in the level of aggression was noted (Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003).

Orpinas, Horne & Staniszewski, (2003) reported that most prevention programs can be classified as “targeted or universal” (p. 432). Targeted programs are aimed at addressing a subgroup of students that are at high risk for displaying violent or aggressive behaviors or who already have a record of such behaviors. Universal programs affect everyone in the school community. The researchers also included a discussion of zero tolerance policies. There has been no evidence so far as to the effectiveness of these policies in reducing or eliminating school violence (Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski). Although the zero tolerance verbiage is concise and powerful, it sends a message to students that they will not be heard and a message to educators that their professional judgment is not needed to solve discipline problems in their school. Zero tolerance is yet another way that we have become reactive in nature and not proactive, specifically in our efforts to respond to inappropriate behaviors like bullying within our schools.

In an effort to maintain focus on the need of whole school—systemic change when addressing bullying—another study reviewed for the purposes of this research was conducted by Sugai and Horner (2002). They examined the importance of implementing a school-wide approach that focused not only on reducing bullying and aggressive behaviors but also on fostering positive behaviors. This approach addressed school reform from a collaborative stance, at a system level, not using a packaged approach. Their line of thinking paralleled the goals of the present study in that the focus was on a uniquely developed set of actions and practices that best fit the individual schools, again making it about people and not programs.

In addition to the role that peer groups play in influencing bullying behavior or the intolerance of such acts, it is important to consider the beliefs and attitudes of teachers and how their beliefs and attitudes are likely to influence their perceptions of bullying behaviors and their responses to bullying incidences. Staff members have a predetermined set of beliefs regarding bullying, beliefs specific to the bully and the victim in particular (Orpinas & Home, 2006). Students in all roles of bullying are keenly aware of the staff members' attitude and willingness to intervene and support students through these challenges. One method for supporting this idea of reciprocal support and development is the creation of professional learning communities, specific to bullying prevention. The following literature addresses the benefits that this system level effort can bring to the organization in the midst of such change. The following portion of the review of literature focuses on professional learning communities and their value in solving school issues.

### **Professional Learning Communities**

“Academic success for students begins with a trusting and mutually respectful relationship between student and teacher, extends to classroom order, and culminates in a safe and supportive school climate that is profoundly and inextricably linked to learning outcomes” (Cornell & Mayer, 2010, p. 11). Many schools and districts proudly proclaim that they are professional learning communities, showing little evidence of understanding the core concepts or implementing the practices of professional learning communities. Educators must develop a deeper, shared knowledge of learning community concepts and practices, and then must demonstrate the discipline to apply those concepts and practices in their own settings if their schools are to be transformed (DuFour, et al., 2005).

Establishing a professional learning community or learning team in elementary schools, with the specific focus of the team one that addresses bullying and desires to establish and cultivate a climate that exudes an intolerance of bullying behavior, is a critical first step in prevention. The success of this endeavor is dependent on the effectiveness of the leader and the marketing of the concept. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) concluded that the most effective leadership is characterized by a leadership team rather than individual. They also concluded that a strong leadership team is the natural outgrowth of a “purposeful community” (p. 99). When teams of professionals gather to engage in meaningful dialogue about bullying prevalence in their school and classrooms; awareness is heightened and growth and learning are taking place (Coloroso, 2008; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010; Swearer, et al., 2009).

In the not so distant past, teachers graduated from college with their degrees in education, were given the keys to their classrooms and told to go forth and teach. Minimal time within the school day was allowed for collaboration with other teachers, and meeting times beyond the school day were sporadic and more socially oriented. Equally influential was the notion that soliciting help was an obvious sign of inadequacy and weakness (Peal, 2007). New teachers would flounder, attempt to figure most out for themselves, and students who crossed over the threshold of their classrooms were likely damaged in the process. The current state of education is ever changing and increasingly complex (Roland & Galloway, 2004). Change is difficult for even the most willing and motivated. What is encouraging is that need is most often the precursor for change. While this is initially unsettling, children have reaped the benefits that have been birthed out of the establishment of professional learning communities in a multitude of ways (Hord & Sommers, 2008). At the heart of professional learning communities is the need to

ply the educational trade in open, collaborative, non-defensive, and student-focused ways (Peal, 2007; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006).

Some research suggests that school leadership which drives school improvement using a more democratic or shared type of leadership and elements of professional learning communities will be better prepared to address bullying and other issues which can damage the learning environment. Changing school organizational culture can be dangerous and often a predictable failure but it can also be a time of great progress towards school improvement and what Hord and Sommers (2008) refer to as “learningful places” (p. 6). Accordingly, Hord and Sommers present five core attributes as the critical elements of the professional learning community. These are shared beliefs and vision, shared and supportive leadership, collective learning, supportive conditions and shared personal practice (p. 9). At the center of all this activity is student learning (Hord & Sommers, 2008) and how school leadership and faculties can make positive changes to encourage this learning atmosphere. Schools which address important contextual impediments to learning, such as bullying, are likely to resemble these professional learning communities’ and are likely to include students as the most important stakeholders.

DuFour and Eaker (1998) contend that in professional learning communities “educators create an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone” (p. xii). The most powerful fuel for sustaining the initiative to improve a school should not be the desire to raise test scores but rather the moral imperative that comes with the desire to fulfill the hopes of the students we serve and those colleagues with whom we work. The development of professional learning communities to address the problem of bullying is the most effective strategy for connecting teachers to the moral imperative (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004).

A common component of traditional bullying prevention programs involves isolation reduction of those who are hurting as well as those who are intensifying the hurting (Williams, 2007). Isolation reduction involves staff members and other students making a concerted effort to include and encourage willing participation of those students who would traditionally not be selected. While this method of prevention can be helpful for brief periods of time, it is an extremely reactive approach (Garbarino & deLara, 2003). The thought of waiting until a child is isolated or excluded or worse yet, removes themselves from the social context of the school environment, is not conducive to the action necessary to proactively engage in school-wide change (Hirschstein, Edstrom, Frey, Snell, & MacKenzie, 2007).

The key to sustainable change in the area of school safety and bullying is a proactive systemic change of the whole school culture in which students are the key agents of change, and play an active role in the development of the approach (Clauset, Lick, & Murphy, 2008). When students do not feel a sense of connection between others and themselves in a greater human community, such as a school, they are more likely to perform antisocial acts against those others (Hazler & Carney, 2002; Phillips, et al., 2008). Deliberate connections that are encouraged by the teachers and school staff members may very well be the only connections certain youth make to their school environment. Methodical deliberation should be taken in the selection process of students who will participate in the professional learning communities. Selection rules and guidelines should be developed as well as opportunities for rotational participation to occur. The more students that are eager and willing to take part in active collaboration, by way of a professional learning community, the more empowerment is taking place within our students (Beaudoin, 2005). Inevitably, good things are bound to happen in an environment such as that.

Reviewing, studying, and interpreting data is the foundation of professional learning communities (Hord, 2009). Professional learning communities, specifically with a student involvement component, is one method for building relationships and connections for students and their peers in schools. The potential for strength and positive action for our youth who need help and for our youth who could potentially give help is increased when they have confidence that others are there to provide support or will be there when needed (Mitra, 2005, 2008a, 2008b). Schools must stop making excuses for failing to collaborate with each other regarding important issues that affect students. Building the collaborative culture of a professional learning community is a question of will (DuFour, 2004). The research has confirmed that working in isolation is a less effective strategy for improving schools. Teachers and school personnel that are determined to work collectively to solve a problem such as bullying will find a way.

School leaders matter in the creation and long term maintenance of professional learning communities. Profound change in schools begins with profound change in leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Leaders have the authority to guide and shape conversations that lead to essential professional learning. As a result of professional learning, leaders alter what they think, say, and do in ways that are observable to others (Sparks, 2005).

An important stakeholder that is more often than not excluded from professional learning communities is the student. Including student voice in the problem solving and decision making process will likely have positive overall effects on the culture of the school and sustainability of any change efforts relative to bullying prevention. Student voice describes the many ways that students have opportunities to share in school decisions that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers. When placed into practice, student voice can range from the most basic level of youth sharing their opinions of problems and potential solutions, to allowing young people to

collaborate with adults to address the specific problems in their schools. to youth taking the lead on seeking change (Mitra, 2005).

School wide bullying prevention programs are more purposeful and relevant when they are informed by students' view. Using participatory action research that involves students in framing a problem statement, identifying or designing a measurement tool, summarizing and analyzing data results, and generating ideas for how staff and students can respond to issues uncovered during data collection will encourage sustainability throughout the change process (Clauzet, et al., 2008). Adults must relinquish some of their power and work to build a tone of trust among adults and students. Without an intentional focus on building relationships, student voice can easily become tokenism (Mitra, 2008).

Research supports the idea that students are most responsive academically to classrooms and schools that are not threatening to students and challenge them to learn more but do so in ways that do not discourage them (Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 1996). Schools where students feel cared about welcome, valued, and seen as more than just learners—they are seen as resources—are schools that create learning communities with authentic student inclusion and validate student voice. Visionary school leaders have engaged in the practice of including student voice for some time now. They realize that student perceptions can provide powerful data about what works to improve the teaching and learning environment of their school. Students are the customers of the educational process. One would assume they would be regularly consulted about their satisfaction and perception of safety.

When students are given the opportunity to collaborate with their teachers and administrators, it is a helpful reminder that students possess unique knowledge and perspectives about their schools and their peers that adults cannot fully replicate (Mitra, 2008b). Adults must

relinquish some of their power and work to build a tone of trust among adults and students. Authentic engagement requires a “rupture of the ordinary” , which demands as much of teachers as it does of students (Fielding, 2004). Many systems will give the impression of an attempt to include student voice in their school improvement efforts to improve community perception or to artificially model best practices brought to their attention. This mediocre effort will rear its transparency rather quickly if a true partnership with the students is not embarked upon. Students can bridge the gap between the adult and student world and make meaning of information that an adult only professional learning community may lack perspective.

The initial phase of inclusion of student voice involves empowerment. Empowerment has been defined as a process involving group participation, critical reflection and control over one’s environment, life and resources (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Empowering young people to create safer environments, including intolerance for bullying behavior, for themselves and their peers is a complex task that must begin with an understanding of the central challenges to be faced. Successful programs designed to eliminate bullying approached peer involvement in several ways that should be considered when school systems and professionals are determining the best match for their schools. These areas include: awareness building, empathetic understanding of other views, isolation reduction, person and situation assessment, and action taking (Hazler & Carney, 2002).

Allowing students to take positive action in bullying prevention, validating and respecting student’s suggestions and beliefs, and empowering them to make a difference to their peers’ school experience lays a strong foundation for sustainable change regarding bullying prevalence in schools. Students make a habit of expressing themselves on a daily basis, whether

we want them to or not. Many times their self-expression is delivered with a negative connotation because students are of the belief this is the only way to get their attention.

In a study focused on student directed peer support systems, Cowie and Hutson (2005) found that using students as a significant catalyst for change enabled them to identify new forms of bullying and develop new approaches to target these new forms. Another way to increase student leadership roles in school settings is to form student focus groups to help identify the specific problems within the school relative to bullying. Student focus groups have helped staff members learn directly from the young people about the types of support needed to feel safe and experience school success (Mitra, 2008a).

Until now prevention efforts, in regards to bullying in elementary schools, has primarily been done—to the students—in a top down fashion. Even really good ideas presented by staff may be dismissed by students, simply in an effort to control their environment. Change efforts in the area of bullying need to embrace student voice, if for no other reason than the difference it makes to the students (Beaudoin, 2005). Students cannot be viewed as spectators who let education happen to them. School is about students, and their participation is nonnegotiable. Beaudoin (2005) stated he believes that schools can change the views of students as non-contributors by practicing one simple principle: define the school as the students' community. Students are powerful and in a unique position to effectively solve the problem of bullying but are too often overlooked as a resource for solving the problem (Phillips, Linney, & Pack, 2008). When students feel a strong connection to their school, they are less likely to exhibit bullying behaviors or tolerate them from their peers (Halford, 1996). Bru, Stephens, and Torsheim (2002) found that students self-reported the most positive behaviors in environments where they had influence on the environment and received emotional support from the teacher. Making students

feel as if they are partners in the conversations regarding bullying prevention is critical (Mitra, 2008a).

Adults must provide young people with substantial room for action; doing this takes significant trust and faith in the values and abilities of the young (Hazler & Carney, 2002). Adults cannot abdicate the essential responsibility for the young people in their care, but it is also true that a much better overall situation exists when young people are given and then allowed to take more direct responsibility for their actions and their environment (Hazler & Carney, 2002). The effort to include student voice and empowerment in implementation of bullying prevention efforts helps young people to develop competencies crucial to becoming an involved and productive citizen, including tolerance, getting along with others, respectfully and effectively questioning authority, and public speaking (Mitra, 2008b). Students are rarely included in school reform or change efforts, yet there is a growing body of research that values youth empowerment efforts and points to the potential benefits of student voice for the students themselves and the school overall. Emphasizing that student voice initiatives are about a partnership of equality and no longer a hierarchical relationship (Mitra, 2008a) will determine the success of the change initiative in bullying prevention and awareness.

In a study done by Nation et al. (2008) there was a striking pattern in the sense of empowerment that students experience from their teachers. These researchers found that the sense of empowerment steadily decreases with age, especially for girls. This suggests that teachers, schools and professional development for instructional staff may need to place emphasis on developing teaching methods that support and maintain students' voice and choice throughout adolescence. Students' invaluable perspectives help identify the issues most in need of improvement and focus school staff members on what students truly experience and what

kinds of support they need. Students play an important role in bridging adult and youth worlds (Mitra, 2008a).

Education is changing. Academic learning and social emotional learning are becoming the new standards for what are considered the basics that children should acquire during their school years. Schools that create a culture in which learning is valued, dreams are born, leaders are made, and the talents of students are unleashed, are schools that embrace the development and sustainability of learning communities. These communities value student voice, participation and empowerment. Students are not only important to their schools and families, but also to their communities, to their future workplaces, and to the world around them. Each student has potential. Although that potential is not identical for all, every student deserves the opportunity to have their unique potential developed to its highest degree (Elias & Arnold, 2006).

School systems and organizations that continue to place quick fixes on victims of bullying will never correct the problem and shape appropriate behavior. It is imperative that a shift in awareness and beliefs occur and then efforts should begin to change the culture of the school at all levels. Students should play an active part in creating a safe and nurturing environment. They are the heart of the movement that must happen. Students' relationships with each other and the adults in the school, their involvement in creating a positive school climate in which all students can learn, and their role in creating and maintaining the social norms of the school are a good places to start.

Many school leaders feel that the best way to handle bullying behavior is to reprimand the bully and distribute punishment for the specific bullying behavior that was demonstrated. This is a troublesome way of thinking because we are continuing to wait for the proverbial other

shoe to fall. By becoming proactive in our efforts and movements, school leaders can spare at least one more child the pain and suffering we have already expected them to work through on their own. Professionals contend that they have a good handle on how they deal with bullying within their organizations. The visible mistreatment that adults see is only the tip of the iceberg and makes up a very small percentage of the broad spectrum of cruelty, bullying, and violence that is a part of the daily lives of students throughout the United States. Beyond the “water’s surface” is the pain, loneliness, desperation and despair that many students are forced to confront everyday (Phillips, Linney, & Pack, 2008, p. 5).

As it is with icebergs, what is visible is at best an incomplete picture. The violence and overt bullying that most adults see are just the tip of the iceberg. As these accounts show, meanness, exclusion, name calling, teasing, gossiping, sexual harassment, and threats are all too common. Bullying has no zip code; it happens to students every day, in any school, in any community. It happens in public schools and private schools. It happens in inner-city, suburban, and rural schools. (Phillips, Linney, & Pack, p.11)

Implementing bullying prevention activities and appropriately addressing bullying situations will help decrease the extent of youth bullying in the United States; will help protect schools from expensive lawsuits; and will decrease the extent of physical, social, and psychological trauma that school children experience in relation to bullying (Dake, et. al, 2004).

Proactive initiatives must be developed, established and massaged by the stakeholders that have assisted in putting them in place. Teachers, students, parents, community members and school leaders are all vital to the success of any new program implemented within a school system or individual school. The focus and accountability measures that are currently in place to address academic achievement are a good start, but until educational leaders begin to give

attention to the whole child, especially the social and emotional development, schools will continue to fall short in their attempt to produce well-adjusted productive members of society. The following literature addresses the benefits that this system level effort can bring to the organization in the midst of such change.

### **Building the Collective Capacity of Stakeholders**

It is imperative that schools wishing to create changes within their buildings, relative to bullying, need to embrace a data-based approach. Conversations, decisions and implementation approaches must be informed by data that are unique to each school. Sustainable change cannot be achieved if decisions are not based on the relevant needs of the school. The Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a study of parents and children in 2001 regarding tough issues that kids face, bullying being one of them. The findings of this national study were that 68% of children, ages 12–15 years old, rated teasing and bullying as a significant problem for students their age and beginning much younger. These statistics suggested that the problems associated with bullying and victimization are affecting a large portion of our youth, adding further support to a systemic approach to addressing bullying.

The first step that a school or organization should take is to collect data; data that is meaningful to the unique context of each school. The establishment of a professional learning community focusing on this issue in particular is vital. Effective professional learning communities understand that their efforts and progress in areas determined for focus must be assessed on the basis of results and not intentions (DuFour, et al., 2004). Reviewing existing surveys that address identified needs or development of a survey that will work for the individual needs of the school are crucial. In any case, the survey selected should collect anonymous data that frames bullying within the larger social context of the school. Too often surveys will ask

students to list or identify the bullies and victims within the school by name. This method of data collection further perpetuates bullying framed as a dyadic issue and can increasingly poison the school climate by encouraging students to focus on negative attributes of their peers and quite possibly falsely accuse individuals (Swearer, et al., 2009). Once a survey or set of questions is selected, scheduling of survey administration must be done. Surveys should also be repeated on an annual basis and data shared prior to the end of each school year. It is important to share all data with the school community on a regular basis in order to change the climate of the school regarding bullying. Change initiatives must be subjected to ongoing assessment and measurement on the basis of tangible results, if not, the initiative represents random groping in the dark rather than purposeful improvement (DuFour, et al., 2004).

Schools and teachers typically suffer from the DRIP syndrome—Data Rich/Information Poor (DuFour, 2004). Result-oriented professional learning communities not only welcome data but also turn data into useful and relevant information for staff and other stakeholders. Schools never suffer from a shortage of data; often times, unfortunately, schools and teachers have a wealth of information at their finger tips and have no idea what to do with the information.

The purpose of this study was to determine if professional development, using school contextual data would provide a deeper understanding and increased attention to the important issue of student bullying.

The specific research questions examined for the purposes of this study were:

1. When using bullying data specific to the schools, are there gaps between student and teacher data regarding perceptions, prevalence, beliefs, and prevention?

2. When using bullying data specific to the school in a professional development session, is there a difference in bullying knowledge between the teacher treatment group and the teacher comparison group?

3. When using bullying data specific to the school in a professional development session, is there a difference in bullying beliefs between the teacher treatment group and the teacher comparison group?

4. Would bullying knowledge be correlated to the teachers' perception of their school as a learning community?

5. Would bullying beliefs be correlated to the teachers' perception of their school as a learning community?

There is a need to implore a data-based call to action where school personnel, teachers and other stakeholders engage in the process of collecting data on an ongoing basis, regarding bullying, harassment, and discrimination in schools. When educators, parents, and students engage in understanding and awareness of the conditions that foster bullying behaviors they will possess the necessary tools to end bullying and victimization in their schools and communities.

Creating environments where all students feel safe, nurtured, and accepted should be the focus of the systemic change efforts within our schools. Including student voice and equipping students to be agents of change throughout this process will help establish an environment intolerant of bullying. When change efforts are implemented with students and not to them or at them, the peer system as a whole is more receptive and open to the process. Schools that create a culture in which learning is valued, dreams are born, leaders are made, and the talents of students—the greatest resource shared by every community—are unleashed, are schools that

embrace the development and sustainability of learning communities, value student voice, participation and empowerment, and education of the whole child.

## CHAPTER III. METHODS

### **Overview**

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. It contains a description of the purpose of the study, the research questions, population and sample, research design, the instrumentation used and data collection and analysis procedures. The objective was to determine if professional development, using school specific contextual data would improve teacher's knowledge and beliefs in regards to bullying. In addition to this, the researcher wanted to know if a follow-up survey in regards to the schools development as a professional learning community would parallel their knowledge and beliefs about bullying.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study, *Exploring school specific context and bullying data: Informing practice with evidence*, was to determine if designing professional development using pre-existing school contextual data would provide deeper understanding and attention to the important issue of bullying. In a follow-up analysis, the researcher wanted to know if school teacher perceptions of bullying beliefs and knowledge were correlated with their perceptions of their school as a professional learning community.

The researcher analyzed pre-existing needs assessment data regarding bullying perception, prevalence, prevention, and beliefs. This data had been collected as part of the individual schools' school improvement plan. The needs assessment data was provided to the researcher from the participating system. The researcher used the results of this pre-existing data

to design professional development. Each data set was unique to the school receiving professional development. At each of the five schools, participants were assigned to the comparison or treatment group using systematic randomization. Participants in the treatment group engaged in the professional development designed for their school and then completed the researcher-developed Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument (BSEI) (see Appendix B). The participants in the comparison group completed the researcher developed BSEI prior to participating in the data driven professional development session.

The researcher hypothesized there would be gaps between the teacher perceptions and the student perceptions of bullying at their school. It was also hypothesized there would be a positive relationship between the participants in the treatment group and their level of bullying knowledge and beliefs as a result of the school specific data informed professional development. In addition the design of the research study allowed the investigator to follow-up with participants to determine if their perceptions of bullying knowledge and beliefs were correlated to their perception of their school as a professional learning community.

The independent variable was the school specific data informed professional development. The dependent variable was the change in knowledge from prior to the professional development experience to after the professional development experience. The researcher hypothesized that participating in data-informed professional development regarding bullying would be beneficial and would significantly increase the knowledge and beliefs of teachers. In a follow-up analysis the researcher explored the possibility of a correlation of teacher perceptions of their school as a professional learning community and bullying beliefs and knowledge. This was deemed important because the literature on professional learning communities suggested that when schools are faced with difficult problems such as bullying they

will be more successful in solving the issue if they are a strong professional learning community (Hord, 2009).

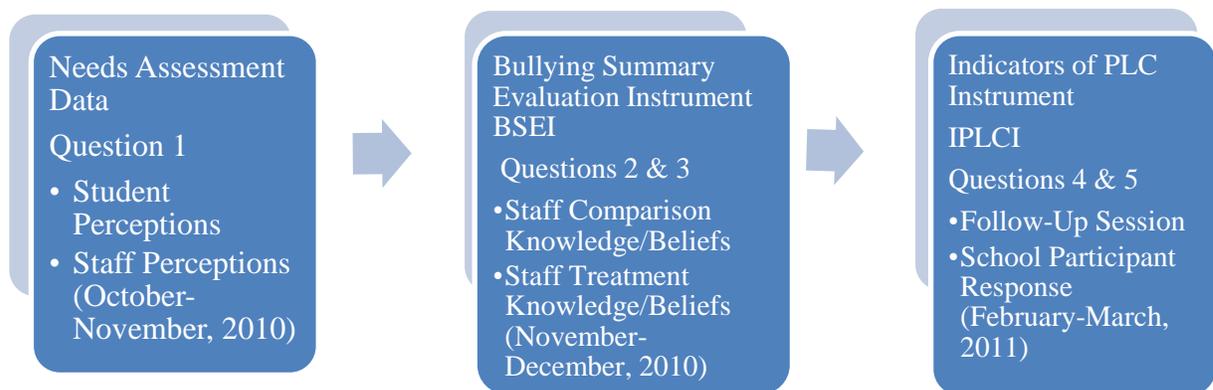
### **Significance of the Study**

In general, the literature pertaining to the issue of bullying in schools continues to grow but it is limited when using the school specific data for professional development. Professional development should be based on faculty needs (Clauset, Lick, & Murphy, 2008). The significance of this study is two-fold. First, the researcher hoped to improve the learning capacity of schools in this system by creating data informed, school specific professional development. Showing faculty that problems can be solved if stakeholders explore their own data is a relatively new practice (Clauset, et al., 2008; Hord, 2009). It has become more important since NCLB and holds promise as a way of informing practice with evidence (Hord & Sommers, 2008). Second, through this investigation, the researcher wanted to create a line of inquiry that would contribute to the growing body of knowledge related to bullying and how this connects to the school organization and its ability to analyze school specific data and function as a professional learning community.

### **Research Questions**

The study addressed the relationships and gaps between the pre-existing needs assessment data which was provided to the researcher from the participating school system. This data had been collected from the students and teachers. The needs assessment data was analyzed within the following domains: perception, prevalence, beliefs and prevention. The researcher used the review of literature as well as the information gleaned from the pre-existing data to develop school specific professional development and to create the BSEI. The BSEI was divided into two domains: bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs. The BSEI was used as a summary

comparison measure of the two participant groups measuring the effectiveness of the professional development given to each school. In a follow-up analysis, the researcher looked at the perceptions of the teachers in regards to bullying knowledge and beliefs as correlates to the school as a professional learning community. Figure 2 presents a visual timeline of the order of study.



*Figure 2.* Timeline and Description of Study Components

There were five research questions for the study. The first question was designed to capture if there were gaps between students’ and teachers’ perceptions in regards to bullying in their specific schools. This question was answered by exploring the needs assessment data. The second and third questions were designed to capture if there were gaps between teachers in the treatment group and the teachers in the comparison group in regards to bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs. These questions were answered by analyzing the data from the BSEI. Questions four and five pertained to the data collected from the follow-up session specific to professional learning communities, using the Indicators of Professional Learning Communities Instrument (IPLCI). Below are the five research questions for this study:

1. When using bullying data specific to the schools, are there gaps between student and teacher data regarding perceptions, prevalence, beliefs, and prevention?
2. When using bullying data specific to the school in a professional development session, is there a difference in bullying knowledge between the teacher treatment group and the teacher comparison group?
3. When using bullying data specific to the school in a professional development session, is there a difference in bullying beliefs between the teacher treatment group and the teacher comparison group?
4. Would bullying knowledge be correlated to the teachers' perception of their school as a learning community?
5. Would bullying beliefs be correlated to the teachers' perception of their school as a learning community?

### **Role of the Researcher**

As an assistant principal in a city school system in [INSERT STATE NAME], the researcher was responsible for overseeing the school's discipline as well as engaging in professional development with the teachers in areas perceived as a need by the teachers themselves or stakeholders within the system and community. After having received SACS/CASI AdvancED accreditation, it was brought to the system's attention that system-wide, the parents perceived bullying as a problem and area in need of focus. In order to be proactive, the researcher's school developed their school action plan and identified one goal to be that of increasing their level of knowledge and awareness in the area of bullying. The following year, the school engaged in a book study as well as continuous professional learning opportunities pertaining to the issue of bullying. School improvement data was collected from students and

teachers to identify exactly what the reality was in this specific school. The teachers authentically engaged in action research to address the issue of bullying within their specific school setting. The researcher was given the opportunity to share the success of the school's efforts in bullying prevention with other schools and systems in the surrounding region. As a result, the researcher was approached by other school systems and was asked to assist them in leading their efforts in bullying prevention as well. Each time the researcher looked at bullying data from other schools and was able to share with their teachers; it was apparent that this was an ideal approach based on their response to their school specific data. This positive influence was what led the researcher in wanting to do this study. Leading the efforts in the researcher's work location allowed the researcher to witness success and failures of specific initiatives put into place at one specific school and allowed the researcher to more effectively confront bullying issues in other schools and systems.

### **Population and Sample**

The administrators and the teachers from five schools within one rural school system in [INSERT STATE NAME] participated in this study. This school system had identified the issue of bullying as a school improvement area of focus. The participating school system consisted of six schools. Five chose to participate in the study. Three of the participating schools are structured as grades K–12, one participating school serves grades K–4, and one participating school serves grades 5–7. Student enrollment of this system was reported to be 3,050 and there were 251 certified personnel during the 2010–2011 school year. A total of 161 respondents voluntarily completed the BSEI and therefore represented the sample for this study. This meant the completion rate for the participating school system was 64.1%.

The system provided the researcher with data collected from a pre-existing needs assessment for use in designing the professional development. The researcher was invited to each of the five schools involved in the study to deliver the professional development session. Each of the consenting teachers was assigned to participate in the treatment group or the comparison group through systematic randomization. The treatment group in each school received the professional development based on their pre-existing bullying data and then completed the BSEI. The participants in the comparison group from each school did not receive the professional development prior to completing the BSEI. The participant population was the appropriate population for inclusion in this study because they were the adults employed in the schools of the system that had prioritized the issue of school bullying and received the professional development based on school specific contextual bullying data. Teachers in K–12 schools are experts in child development and school improvement. Bullying is an area of importance for both child development and school improvement. School safety and student achievement are related. Students who are bullied and do not feel safe at school are likely to not perform as well in academics, or social skills. This study may help school systems increase student engagement, teacher engagement, and strengthen the school as a learning community.

## **Instrumentation**

### **Pre-Existing Needs Assessment Instruments**

The Student and Teacher Needs Assessment Instruments were developed by the researcher in the fall of 2009, while conducting action research at the school where the researcher was employed as an assistant principal. This school had identified bullying prevention efforts as a priority. This was noted in the school improvement plan. The system participating in this study asked permission from the researcher to use the needs assessment

instruments to determine the current reality in their schools. The needs assessment instruments were anonymous and comprised of 33 Likert-type items and one open-ended question on the student needs assessment. The teacher needs assessment consisted of 33 Likert-type items and one open-ended question as well. The data from the needs assessments were analyzed using the following domains:

- (a) Perception
- (b) Prevalence
- (c) Prevention
- (d) Beliefs

### **Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument (BSEI)**

The instrument, developed by the researcher, used for the bullying summary evaluation data collection was anonymous and comprised of 27 Likert-type items and four open-ended response items pertaining to the following two domains:

- (a) Bullying Knowledge
- (b) Bullying Beliefs

A sample question in the bullying knowledge domain was *“My knowledge has increased of the types of bullying that occur at this school, as reported by student and teacher perceptions”*.

Other knowledge areas that were addressed were specific to frequency of bullying, gender related issues pertaining to bullying, location of bullying, and willingness to intervene within each school. A sample question in the bullying beliefs domain was *“I believe victims of bullying bring it on themselves”*. Additional belief items regarded bullying as a normal part of growing up, bullying is really just students teasing and having fun, and students should take care of their own problems, even bullying.

## **Indicators of Professional Learning Communities Follow-Up Instrument (IPLCI)**

As a result of the initial professional development session, the results of the data from the BSEI, and findings from the review of the literature, the researcher conducted a follow-up session with each of the participating schools to provide additional information about specific ways to address the issue of bullying, namely through professional learning communities. The researcher also collected additional data on the current practices in each school relative to professional learning communities. The follow-up instrument consisted of 17 Likert-type items, all within the domain of professional learning communities. This domain was further organized into five dimensions, based on the work of Hord and Sommers (2009).

The timing of the data collection for the study was given major consideration because it might have influenced teacher perceptions in the area of bullying as well as prevalence of occurrences as the year progressed. The academic calendar runs from August through May in [INSERT STATE NAME]. Considering the transitional time included at the beginning of each year as well as the natural progression of student familiarity to their environment, it was determined by the participating school system that the pre-existing student and teacher needs assessment data would be collected between October, 2010 and November, 2010. Professional development was designed and delivered between November, 2010 and December, 2010. The researcher administered the BSEI to the comparison group prior to the professional development and to the treatment group after the professional development. The results of the data from the BSEI were matched with the results from the IPLCI by school. The IPLCI was given to teachers between February, 2011 and March, 2011.

A panel of experts holding advanced degrees in the areas of educational leadership as well as program design and evaluation determined the validity of the BSEI content. The panel of

experts consisted of a public school administrator specializing in safe schools initiatives with a concentration in the area of bullying prevention, two college professors both with K–12 backgrounds, and one college professor with expertise in survey design. The researcher used the content validity process to review the BSEI and ensure that each of the two domains, bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs, were adequately represented within the instrument. The expert panel met numerous times to discuss and revise specific items on the instrument. After various meetings and communications, the expert panel group finally agreed the instrument was ready to pilot.

### **Pilot Study**

The group of experts described above assembled for a final revision of the BSEI and then agreed to an administration of the survey. In order to determine the validity of the BSEI, a pilot test was conducted in a neighboring system to the one participating in the study. Participants chosen for the pilot test were not included in the sample for this study. The school selected for the pilot fit the general description of the sample population. The pilot study site had proactively addressed the issue of bullying within their school and the student and teacher needs assessment were developed as an outcome. The pilot school teachers had participated in ongoing dialogue and professional book studies over the last few years specific to bullying. The pilot group participants were timed for completion so the researcher would know the approximate time commitment that would be expected from participants. The BSEI took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The IPLCI, given after the follow-up session, took less than 10 minutes to complete. Final input concerning the questions was garnered from the group after this administration. Participants were asked to identify items that were unclear or did not seem to fit

into the dimension described. Several items were simplified or revised as a result of this discussion.

A survey design appeared to be the appropriate means of gathering data necessary for this study. It was determined that the researcher would use a paper pencil survey method to ensure a high response rate and honesty in responses as the researcher would be present and responsible for the collection of completed instruments. The major disadvantage of the paper survey method is the time commitment to entering and analyzing the data. The response rate for this study was 64.1%. This is considered a highly successful response rate (Dillman, 2000; Punch, 2003). The researcher surmised that the time commitment and laboriousness of data entry was worth the effort when data collection and analysis were complete.

The instructions for the instrument were clearly stated at the top of the instrument. Respondents were given an information letter explaining their participation was voluntary. The professional development was not voluntary as it was part of a professional requirement as a component of their school improvement plan. The completed, submitted instruments served as their consent to participate.

### **Instrument Reliability**

In order to determine the validity of the instruments used for this study, the researcher utilized an expert panel to review the items. The panel of experts consisted of a public school administrator specializing in safe schools initiatives with a concentration in the area of bullying prevention, two college professors both with K–12 backgrounds, and one college professor with expertise in survey design. The researcher used the content validity process to review the summary evaluation instrument and ensure that each domain, bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs, was adequately represented within the instrument (Gay, 1996; Ross & Shannon, 2008).

In order to determine the validity of the Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument, a pilot test was conducted in a neighboring system to the one participating in the study. Participants chosen for the pilot test were not included in the sample for this study. The school selected for the pilot fit the general description of the sample population and were willing to cooperate with the study.

Additionally, in order to determine reliability, the researcher used the Cronbach's alpha. This method was selected because it considers all possible item pairs and evaluates the reliability of an instrument in terms of how consistent the actual items are (Ross & Shannon, 2008). The Cronbach's alpha was determined for each of the domains for each participant group (treatment and comparison).

Table 1 presents the number of items within each domain on each instrument and the Cronbach's Alpha for each item pair on the instruments. On the BSEI, the two study domains presented were Knowledge and Beliefs. The Cronbach's Alpha for the Knowledge domain was .940 for the comparison group and .935 for the treatment group. There were 15 items in the Knowledge domain. The Cronbach's Alpha for the Beliefs domain was .637 for the comparison group and .758 for the treatment group. There were 12 items in the Beliefs domain. The follow-up instrument was the IPLCI which had 17 items pertaining to professional learning communities. The comparison group had a Cronbach's Alpha of .931 and the treatment group had a Cronbach's Alpha of .896.

Table 1

*Reliability Statistics for the BSEI and the Follow-up Instrument, IPLCI, (n=161) Given a Treatment/Comparison Group Design*

Domain	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Knowledge		
Comparison	.940	15
Treatment	.935	15
Beliefs		
Comparison	.637	12
Treatment	.758	12
Professional Learning Communities (IPLCI)		
Comparison	.931	17
Treatment	.896	17

### **Open Ended Themes**

Teachers randomly assigned to the treatment group were also given the opportunity to respond to two open ended questions. The first was to respond to three of the five stems in the space provided. The following choices were given:

- The most surprising gaps between student and teacher perception were in the area of...
- After viewing my school specific data, one change I will make to my current practices specific to bullying is...

- One unanswered question and/or concern I still have specific to bullying in this school is...
- I think we should pay more attention to context specific bullying data of our school because...
- I would like to serve in the capacity of \_\_\_\_\_ concerning bullying at this school.

The second open-ended question the treatment participants were asked to respond to was

- Based on the bullying in-service, what changes do you now feel need to be made in your school concerning the prevention of bullying?

Alpha internal consistent reliability coefficients were computed for each of the dimensions of the needs assessment instruments. This method was selected because it considers all possible item pairs and evaluates the reliability of an instrument in terms of how consistent the actual items are (Ross & Shannon, 2008). The coefficients were determined for each of the needs assessment domains for each group (students and teachers).

Table 2 presents the reliability statistics for the Needs Assessment Instruments, within each domain and for each group, student and teacher. The prevalence domain had 13 items and a Cronbach's Alpha of .856 overall, .855 for the student group and .883 for the teacher group. The perception domain had four items and an overall Cronbach's Alpha of .478. The Cronbach's Alpha for the student group was .478 and .573 for the teacher group. The prevention domain had seven items and an overall Cronbach's Alpha of .608. The Cronbach's Alpha for the student group was .646 and .394 for the teacher group. The beliefs domain had nine items and an overall Cronbach's Alpha of .408. The Cronbach's Alpha for the student group was .194 and .673 for the teacher group.

Table 2

*Reliability Statistics for the Needs Assessment Instruments given a Student/Teacher (n = 708/n = 110) Grouping Design*

Domain	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Prevalence	.856	13
Student	.855	13
Teacher	.883	13
Perception	.478	4
Student	.478	4
Teacher	.573	4
Prevention	.608	7
Student	.646	7
Teacher	.394	7
Beliefs	.408	9
Student	.194	9
Teacher	.673	9

When the BSEI results were received from the 161 study participants, instrument reliability was computed for both domains. The reliability data follows.

### **Knowledge Domain**

Alpha internal consistent reliability coefficients were computed for both of the study domains using responses from all 161 participants. Results are reported in Tables 3-4. Reported in Table 3 are results for the Knowledge domain. The correlation coefficients between each of

the 15 items and the total score on the Knowledge domain ranged from .405 to .946, thereby verifying that each of the items consistently measured what the total Knowledge domain was measuring. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for 13 of 15 items further verifying that each of the 13 items increased the reliability of the knowledge domain. Item 17 was .948 which is slightly higher when deleted. Item 18 was .947 which is also slightly higher when item was deleted. This informed the researcher that item 17 and 18 slightly decreased the reliability of the Knowledge domain when included. With all 15 items, the reliability coefficient for the Knowledge domain was .946.

Table 3

*Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Knowledge Domain*

Domain: Knowledge	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of the gaps between student and teacher perceptions of bullying frequency in our school.	.785	.940
2. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of the types of bullying that occur at this school, as reported by student and teacher perceptions.	.826	.940
3. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of gaps in perception regarding the gender of bullies, as reported by students and teachers.	.816	.940
4. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge in regards to the teachers and students willingness to intervene.	.828	.939

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

Domain: Knowledge	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
5. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of the location of bullying in our school, as reported by student and teacher perceptions.	.824	.939
6. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of the gaps in teacher and student perception regarding the types of victimization occurring at this school.	.844	.939
8. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of why students bully, based on student and teacher perceptual gaps as well as research findings.	.712	.942
14. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of effective prevention strategies for students to use to effectively address bullying.	.758	.941
15. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of effective prevention strategies for teachers to use to effectively address bullying.	.735	.942
16. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of effective prevention strategies for school personnel to use to effectively address bullying.	.712	.942
17. To prevent bullying, school personnel need to know what data, specific to their school, is reported by students, regarding bullying.	.405	.948
18. Based on the bullying in-service, I know what research says on how to prevent/intervene in bullying incidents.	.498	.947
19. The bullying in-service using our school data increased my knowledge of this issue.	.652	.944
20. The bullying in-service using our school data increased my awareness of how bullying interferes with learning.	.655	.944

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

Domain: Knowledge	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
21. The bullying in-service validated the importance of using school specific data to increase knowledge and awareness of this issue, based on the gaps between student and teacher data.	.675	.943
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Knowledge Domain		.946

### **Beliefs Domain**

Table 4 contains the results for the Beliefs domain. The correlation coefficients between each of the 12 items and the total score on the Beliefs domain ranged from .187 to .835, thereby verifying that each of the 12 items consistently measured what the Beliefs domain was measuring. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for all but three of the 12 items. Item 7a had a Cronbach alpha of .330 and a deletion factor of .836, item 7d had a Cronbach alpha of .187 and a deletion factor of .852, and item 7g had a Cronbach alpha of .306 and a deletion factor of .837. These three items slightly decreased the reliability of the Beliefs domain when included. With all twelve items, the reliability coefficient for the Beliefs domain was .835.

Table 4

*Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Beliefs Domain*

Domain: Beliefs	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
7a. I believe that students should learn to take care of their own problems, even bullying.	.330	.836
7b. I believe that what people are calling bullying in this school is really just students teasing and having fun.	.535	.820
7c. I believe that bullying is a part of growing up and students will grow out of it. "Boys will be boys, girls will be girls."	.535	.820
7d. I believe that a majority of incidences occur outside of the classroom so teachers are not informed or aware of the problem.	.187	.852
7e. I believe that victims of bullying bring it on themselves.	.539	.820
7f. I believe that increased teacher awareness would decrease bullying behaviors at this school.	.535	.819
7g. I believe that I have played a part in stopping bullying behaviors at this school.	.306	.837
9. Based on our school's bullying data, I believe that faculty should take responsibility of bullying issues in our school.	.528	.820
10. I believe that all stakeholders in this school, including students, should be involved in prevention efforts in order to reduce bullying.	.713	.807
11. I believe that we should proactively increase knowledge about the harmful effects of bullying for all stakeholders, including students.	.627	.813
12. I believe that it is important for us to understand why children bully if we wish for it to stop.	.638	.813

Table 4 (continued)

Domain: Beliefs	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
13. I believe that stakeholder awareness of bullying will make our school safer.	.649	.812
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Beliefs Domain		.835

### Indicators of Professional Learning Community Instrument

Table 5 contains the results for the Indicators of Professional Learning Community Instrument which was given after the follow-up session with each participating school. This instrument was defined and analyzed by five core elements. These five are shared beliefs, values and vision, shared and supportive leadership, collective learning and its application, and supportive conditions.

Table 5

*Item-Total Correlation, Coefficient Alpha if Item Deleted, and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Indicators of Professional Learning Community Instrument within the Five Domains*

Professional Learning Communities	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<b>Shared Beliefs, Values, Vision</b>		
1. The administration and teachers at this school are engaged in continuous learning opportunities in the area of bullying prevention.	.444	.819
2. In the past year, bullying has been discussed at a minimum of three meetings such as faculty, PTA, grade level, or leadership team meetings.	.665	.580

(table continues)

Table 5 (continued)

Professional Learning Communities	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
3. In the past year, our faculty has engaged in at least one book study related to bullying prevention.	.698	.538
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the Shared beliefs, values, and vision domain		.757
<b>Shared and Supportive Leadership</b>		
4. At this school the administration and teachers are willing to share in decision making regarding bullying prevention.	.661	.672
5. At this school the administration and teachers are willing to share in taking responsibility regarding bullying prevention.	.736	.602
6. At this school the administration and the teachers welcome student voice in regards to bullying issues.	.504	.852
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the shared and supportive leadership domain		.787
<b>Collective Learning and its Application</b>		
7. If school data informs the teachers that bullying is a concern at this school, we should receive professional development in this area.	.310	.382
8. Teachers and administrators at this school are guided by research based practices on bullying.	.310	.478
14. Teachers at this school understand that the fundamental purpose of this school is student learning and bullying should not be allowed to interfere.	.359	.286
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the collective learning and its application domain		.460

(table continues)

Table 5 (continued)

Professional Learning Communities	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<b>Supportive Conditions</b>		
9. If administrators and teachers agreed professional development for bullying was important; time, space and other resources would be made available.	.620	.669
10. If administrators and teachers found bullying to be a concern we would be able to collaborate to address this issue.	.549	.715
11. Relational factors exist at this school that support meaningful conversations regarding bullying.	.504	.740
17. There is trust amongst teachers and administrators which allows for productive conversations concerning bullying.	.585	.688
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the supportive conditions domain		.760
<b>Shared Personal Practice</b>		
12. Teachers at this school are willing to give and receive feedback regarding bullying.	.625	.814
13. Bullying prevention strategies are successful because the administration and faculty support one another towards improvement of the learning environment.	.602	.826
15. Teachers at this school would embrace change in structures and processes that would decrease bullying incidents to improve the learning environment.	.691	.785
16. Teachers and administrators at this school support one another in regards to bullying prevention strategies in order to improve the learning environment.	.772	.745
Coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability for the shared personal practice domain		.837

Shared beliefs, values, and vision had a reliability coefficient of .757 with three items included. The correlation coefficients between each of the three items and the total score on the shared beliefs, values and vision scale ranged from .444 to .757. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for two of the three items. Item 1 had a Cronbach alpha of .444 and a deletion factor of .819. This item slightly decreased the reliability of this dimension when included. With all three items, the reliability coefficient for the shared beliefs, values, and vision scale was .757.

Shared and supportive leadership had a reliability coefficient of .787 with three items included. The correlation coefficients between each of the three items and the total score on the shared and supportive leadership ranged from .504 to .787. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for two of the three items. Item 6 had a Cronbach alpha of .504 and a deletion factor of .852 slightly reducing the reliability for the shared and supportive leadership dimension. With all three items, the reliability coefficient for shared and supportive leadership was .787.

The third dimension of the Professional Learning Community Instrument was Collective Learning and its Application. This dimension had a reliability coefficient of .460. The correlation coefficients between each of the three items and the total score on the collective learning and its application ranged from .310 to .460. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for two of the three items within this dimension. Item eight had a Cronbach alpha of .310 and a deletion factor of .478, reducing the reliability for the collective learning and its application dimension.

The fourth dimension of the Professional Learning Community Instrument was Supportive Conditions. This dimension had a reliability coefficient of .760. The correlation coefficients between each of the four items as well as the total score on the supportive conditions

domain ranged from .504 to .760. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for all four of the items within this scale informing us that each of the four items included increased the reliability of the supportive conditions dimension.

The fifth dimension of the Professional Learning Community Instrument was Shared Personal Practice. This scale had a reliability coefficient of .837. The correlation coefficients between each of the four items as well as the total score on the shared personal practice ranged from .602 to .837. The coefficient alpha if item deleted was reduced for all four of the items within this dimension making it clear that each of the four items increased the reliability of the shared personal practice dimension.

### **Reliability of All Scales and Instruments**

With Cronbach's alpha of .60 or greater being a generally accepted standard for measures assessing group differences, the reliability coefficients which ranged from .74 to .95 on all the items within the beliefs and knowledge scales strongly substantiates the internal consistency of these items. In fact, these scales far exceed the standards set for minimum levels of reliability (Thorndike, 2005). The Collective Learning and its Application dimension on the IPLCI had a reliability coefficient of .48, which is below the minimum standard generally accepted but the other four dimensions of this instrument ranged from .745 to .820, which indicate a strong internal consistency in each of these other areas.

In closing, the reliability of a majority of the scales supported the work of the expert panel in validating the instruments. Outcomes suggest that issues associated with content and construct validity were addressed and that the researcher created instruments which could be used in other studies. Between the meetings of the panel, emails, telephone conversations and

informal discussions between members of the team, the instruments held up well when used system wide with the participants of the study.

### **Research Design**

The researcher employed primarily quantitative data analysis methods using descriptive statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The goal was to determine the significance of differences between the two groups, treatment and comparison, using each of the group means. Qualitative data, collected from the participant responses to the open ended question was analyzed for emerging trends or unique insights. The first step of data collecting included analysis of pre-existing needs assessment school data within the domains of perception of bullying, prevalence, prevention, and beliefs, collected for the purpose of school improvement.

The current study's data was collected and analyzed using the researcher created BSEI. This instrument was distributed to study participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study after receiving a letter of invitation. Study participants were assigned to the treatment group or comparison group using systematic randomization. The treatment participants received professional development based on their school specific bullying data, collected from the students and the teachers for the purposes of school improvement, and then completed the BSEI. Those participants in the comparison group completed the BSEI prior to receiving the data informed professional development. The study participants were volunteers. The information contained in the BSEI was information garnered from the pre-existing bullying data the field test site as well as the participating school system, collected as part of their school improvement plan.

The data informed professional development was the independent variable. The dependent variable was the knowledge gained or positive relationship the data informed

professional development had on the treatment group's knowledge and positive beliefs held regarding bullying prevention within their schools, operationalized by the BSEI. As a follow-up to the professional development provided, the researcher wanted to know if the teachers within each school placed value on the use of professional learning communities as a way to address bullying as well as other school related issues.

A survey design appeared to be the most appropriate means of gathering the data necessary for the study. It was determined that a paper/pencil method of data collection was most appropriate so that it could be done in the presence of the researcher and to ensure a high rate of return by the researcher disseminating and collecting the responses.

### **Demographic Data**

Certain school, student and teacher demographic characteristics known in the literature to possibly be related to the issue of bullying in schools were gathered in the initial items of the BSEI. The literature suggested that the perceptions of the teachers and students regarding school bullying; as well as the level of awareness and knowledge of the stakeholders can directly affect the learning environment of the school. The student population as well as the grade level assignment of the students and the teachers was included, as this data was pertinent to the professional development provided to the teachers within the participating schools. For this study the demographic information gathered was used to describe the participating school settings and student and teacher population under investigation.

## **Research Procedures**

### **Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

To complete the study, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was applied for and granted. The researcher secured exempt status for the study (see Appendix E).

## **Data Collection**

Data collection began in October, 2010 and continued until complete, March, 2011. An information letter (see Appendix E) explaining the study was provided to the participants. Participants were informed of procedures included in the study and had the opportunity to forgo participation. The information letter also assured participants that the evaluation data would be completely anonymous and there was no risk involved in participating. The data provided by the participants served as their agreement.

Data was collected from the teachers within each participating school. The researcher acquired permission from the superintendent to conduct research within their school system. After acquiring permission, schools were invited to participate. The researcher worked with individual school leaders who made available the pre-existing data collected for the purposes of school improvement. The researcher analyzed the pre-existing data using SPSS 18. The statistical technique used to analyze the pre-existing data was descriptive statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The researcher designed the school specific professional development based on the pre-existing student and teacher needs assessment data within each school. The researcher scheduled a mutually convenient time to provide the professional development for each of the participating schools in separate sessions. Additionally, after the first session was complete in each of the five schools and the data was analyzed, the researcher conducted a follow-up session with each school to discuss the value and benefits of using a professional learning community to address school issues such as bullying. Data was collected using the follow-up instrument (IPLCI) at this second session.

The participants are the employees of one distinct school system. The system had identified bullying prevention as an area of focus prioritized in their system school improvement

plan. Volunteers were invited to participate in the BSEI after receiving the data informed professional development (treatment group) or before the professional development was provided (comparison group). The participating system consisted of six schools that covered an approximate 60 mile area of the county. Five of the six schools chose to participate in this study. Three of the schools were structured as K–12, one school served K–4, and one school served 5–7. Enrollment of this system was approximately 3, 050 students during the 2010–2011 school year.

## **Statistical Analysis**

### **Sampling Method**

The population for this study consisted of five schools from one system in [INSERT STATE NAME] making bullying prevention a priority. Purposeful sampling was used to determine participation of schools within the population that met specific criteria. The criteria for selection included:

1. School systems who prioritized bullying prevention documented in their system school improvement plan.
2. Schools within this system willing to participate in the study and interested in receiving school specific contextual professional development based on pre-existing data collected for school improvement purposes.

### **Treatment**

This study made use of school specific data informed professional development as the intervention designed to inform and improve teacher knowledge and awareness specific to bullying, as well as the beliefs held regarding bullying prevention. In addition, the design of the research study allowed the investigator to follow-up with participants to determine if their

perceptions of bullying knowledge and beliefs were correlated to their perception of their school as a professional learning community.

The initial professional development was designed around the specific domains identified from the pre-existing student and teacher data, provided to participants (see Appendix C). The four domains were perception, prevalence, prevention, and beliefs. Study participants assigned to the treatment group received the school specific professional development prior to completing the BSEI. The professional development consisted of one three-hour session for each school. Study participants assigned to the comparison group completed the BSEI prior to participating in the professional development. Systematic randomization was used to assign participants to each group so that each school had a relatively equal number of participants in the treatment and comparison group. The follow-up session to administer the IPLCI, consisted of an additional hour at each of the participating schools.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher utilized the statistical analysis procedures of descriptive statistics programs in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 18.0. Responses from the 161 BSEI's were entered into SPSS and all analysis was performed using the SPSS 18.0.

The most appropriate statistical method for this study was determined to be one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) between the two groups of participants, using the F-test statistic. The pre-existing data from each school was collected from student and teacher needs assessments. The data from these two groups were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess differences in mean scores between the teacher data and the students within each domain analyzed. Descriptive statistics were also run to provide more detailed information

during the professional development designed for each school. Table 6 shows the domain matrix used to align and analyze the data from the pre-existing needs assessments within each school.

Table 6

*Domain Matrix between Pre-existing Student and Teacher Needs Assessment Instruments*

Domain	Student	Teacher
Perception	1, 2, 10, 11, 30	1, 2, 10, 11, 30
Prevalence	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22
Prevention	12, 13, 14, 15, 28, 29	12, 13, 14, 15, 28, 29
Beliefs	23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34	23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34

Table 7 defines the items on the BSEI within the knowledge and the beliefs domains. There were 15 items within the Knowledge domain and 12 items within the Beliefs domain.

Table 7

*Domain Descriptions for Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument*

Domain	Indicators
Knowledge	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
Beliefs	7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e, 7f, 7g, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Table 8 defines the items on the IPLCI within the five dimensions of professional learning communities. There were 17 items on the IPLCI. Shared Beliefs, Values, Vision

consisted of three items. Shared and Supportive Leadership consisted of three items. Collective Learning and its Application consisted of three items. Supportive Conditions contained four items and Shared Personal Practice contained four items.

Table 8

*Domain Descriptions for Indicators of Professional Learning Communities Instrument*

Domain	Indicators
Professional Learning Communities	
Shared Beliefs, Values, Vision	1, 2, 3
Shared and Supportive Leadership	4, 5, 6
Collective Learning and its Application	7, 8, 14
Supportive Conditions	9, 10, 11, 17
Shared Personal Practice	12, 13, 15, 16

There were three phases to the study: analyze the pre existing bullying needs assessment data and build a professional development session tailored for each of the five schools; provide the professional development and evaluate the treatment data for relationships in the treatment and comparison groups; and provide a follow-up session to determine if there was a correlation between bullying and teacher’s perceptions of their school as a professional learning community. This included the pre-existing student and teacher data given with permission to the researcher, collected for the purposes of school improvement as well as the data collected from the current study’s instrument *BSEI* and the follow-up instrument, *IPLCI*. Teachers who volunteered to participate in the study received an information letter (Appendix A) describing the purpose of the

research. Respondents were assured that neither their personal identity nor the identity of their school would be released in the dissertation.

Descriptive statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were the primary methods used to analyze the data collected (Hair, 2009). There were 27 Likert style questions and four open ended items on the BSEI. The Likert items addressed the areas of the professional development including: knowledge of bullying and beliefs in regards to bullying. The four open ended questions accompanying the survey were analyzed to identify common themes concerning school leadership and faculty perceptions of bullying within the context of their particular school.

In the follow-up session, the researcher was able to collect additional data pertaining to professional learning communities and the perception of the school's strength as a professional learning community, using the IPLCI. This instrument contained 17 Likert type items.

The rationale for using a one-way analysis of variance for this study is that the goal of the researcher was to determine the significance of differences between the participant responses in the treatment and comparison groups in this study using data from the BSEI. In essence, using an analysis of variance assessed whether the null hypothesis, which states there is no difference in the groups, is better than the alternative hypothesis, which states there is a difference in the groups (Ross & Shannon, 2008).

### **Summary**

This chapter provided the details about the methodology used in the study. The study focused on analyzing needs assessment data provided to the researcher, from teachers and students, and using the information gleaned to design professional development specific to the individual school needs in the area of bullying. The study participants were invited to participate

in the BSEI either before the professional development (comparison group) or after the professional development (treatment group). The instrument was administered to all school teachers within the participating system, and an information letter invited them to participate. The return rate of the BSEI was 64.1% based on the system personnel records provided on the state website. Validity was established using a series of focus groups and dialogue sessions with the expert panel. Reliability coefficients were established with the administration of the instrument to the system participants.

The next chapter reports the findings of this study. It includes information about the demographic make-up of the students and teachers in the participating schools and the participants' perceptions regarding the dimensions and outcomes addressed in the study.

## CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

### **Introduction**

Chapter four contains the research findings of this study. The purpose of this study was to determine if professional development, using school contextual data, would bring deeper understanding to the important issue of student bullying. There were three phases to the study: analyze the pre existing bullying needs assessment data and build a professional development session tailored for each of the five schools; provide the professional development and evaluate the treatment data for relationships in the treatment and comparison groups; and provide a follow-up session to determine if there was an association between bullying and teacher's perceptions of their school as a professional learning community.

In phase one, the researcher used pre-existing needs assessment bullying data collected by each of the participating schools. The needs assessment bullying data had been collected for the purpose of school improvement. The student and teacher needs assessments included bullying domains of: perceptions, prevalence, beliefs, and prevention. Relationships were determined within this data and used to design professional development unique to each participating school.

In phase two, the Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument (BSEI) was used to capture the bullying knowledge and belief changes as a result of the provided professional development. The BSEI included the domains of: bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs. The researcher wanted to determine if there was a positive relationship between the intervention or the school

specific professional development, and the teacher's knowledge about bullying and their bullying beliefs.

Finally, in phase three of the study, after conducting the professional development session and collecting the data from the BSEI, the researcher provided each participating school with a follow-up session pertaining to professional learning communities and their value in addressing school related issues such as bullying. At the conclusion of this follow-up session, the researcher invited the participants to complete the Indicators of Professional Learning Communities Instrument (IPLCI). This data was analyzed to determine if there was a correlation of bullying knowledge or bullying beliefs with teacher's perception of their school as a learning community.

### **Research Questions**

This chapter is organized in terms of five specific research questions. In Phase 1 the first research question was answered using the data compiled from the student and teacher pre-existing needs assessments. This data was used to answer research question 1 and to create the professional development for each of the five schools. Phase 2, or research question two and three were examined by administering the professional development and then administering the BSEI for the treatment group participants and administering the BSEI and then administering the professional development for the comparison group participants. During Phase 3, the follow-up sessions at each school were measured using the IPLCI. This data was used to answer research questions four and five. The following five research questions were generated from the knowledge gathered from the review of the literature as well as information gleaned from the needs assessment data.

1. When using bullying data specific to the schools, were there gaps between student and teacher data regarding perceptions, prevalence, beliefs, and prevention?
2. When using bullying data specific to the school in a professional development session, was there a difference in bullying knowledge between the teacher treatment group and the teacher comparison group?
3. When using bullying data specific to the school in a professional development session, was there a difference in bullying beliefs between the teacher treatment group and the teacher comparison group?
4. Would bullying knowledge be correlated to the teachers' perception of their school as a learning community?
5. Would bullying beliefs be correlated to the teachers' perception of their school as a learning community?

### **Description of the Population and Sample**

According to the 2010 Census Bureau data, the population of the county the participating system is in was 41,616. The ethnicity data in comparison to the state was 69.9% White in the county, 68.5% White in [INSERT STATE NAME]. The county registered 26.6% Black and 26.2% in [INSERT STATE NAME]. The Hispanic data received was 2.5% county and 3.9% in [INSERT STATE NAME]. Persons identifying as having two or more races were 1.0% county and 1.5% in [INSERT STATE NAME]. The ethnic categories of Asian and American Indian/Alaskan Native were all 1.1% or less at the county and state level. Data pertaining to persons living below poverty were 17.8% within the county and 17.5% in [INSERT STATE NAME].

Data comparing the size of the participating school district with [INSERT STATE NAME] average were as follows: the participating district had 6 schools; the state average was 11.5 on the 2010 Census Bureau data. The number of classroom teachers in the district was 251 while the average in districts across the state per district was 356 teachers. The participation rate on the Census for [INSERT STATE NAME] was 72% while the county in which the participating system is located was 66% participation rate on the 2010 Census.

The teachers from five schools within one rural school system in central [INSERT STATE NAME] participated in the study. The system had identified bullying prevention as an area of focus prioritized in their system school improvement plan. The participants were certified employees of this school system. Volunteers were invited to participate in the BSEI after receiving the data informed professional development (treatment group) or before the professional development was provided (comparison group). The participating school system consisted of six schools. Five chose to participate in the study. Three of the participating schools are structured as grades K–12, one participating school serves grades K–4, and one participating school serves grades 5–7. Student enrollment of this system was reported to be 3,050 and there were 251 certified personnel during the 2010–2011 school year. A total of 161 respondents voluntarily completed the BSEI and therefore represented the sample for this study. This meant the completion rate for the participating school system was 64%.

**Research Question One: When using bullying data from the student and teacher needs assessment, are there gaps between student and teacher data regarding perceptions, prevalence, beliefs, and prevention?**

### **Student and Teacher Needs Assessment Demographic Data**

The following data pertains to the pre-existing student and teacher needs assessment. In order to answer research question one, it was necessary to compile and disaggregate data from students and teachers at each of the five schools. The researcher used this information to build the professional development session for individual schools. Basic demographic information to describe student populations and teachers was presented during the professional development.

#### **Student Gender**

Table 9 describes the student gender at each participating school. School one had 51.2% ( $n = 84$ ) female students and 48.8% ( $n = 80$ ) male students respond. School two had 51.8% ( $n = 86$ ) female students and 48.2% ( $n = 80$ ) male students respond. School three had 52.6% ( $n = 80$ ) female students and 47.4% ( $n = 72$ ) male students respond. School four had 54.1% ( $n = 99$ ) female students and 44.3% ( $n = 81$ ) male students complete the needs assessment. Finally, school five had 48.8% ( $n = 21$ ) female students and 51.2% ( $n = 22$ ) male students respond.

Table 9

*Frequency and Percentages for Students by Gender on Pre-Existing Needs Assessment Data provided to Researcher*

Gender	School				
	1	2	3	4	5
Female	84 51.2%	86 51.8%	80 52.6%	99 54.1%	21 48.8%
Male	80 48.8%	80 48.2%	72 47.4%	81 44.3%	22 51.2%
Missing	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 1.6%	0 0.0%

### **Student Ethnicity**

Table 10 defines the ethnicity of the students who completed the needs assessment instrument in their respective schools. School one had 64.0% ( $n = 105$ ) identified White, 30.5% ( $n = 50$ ) Black, 1.2% ( $n = 2$ ) Hispanic, 0.6% ( $n = 1$ ) other, and 3.7% ( $n = 6$ ) missing data specific to ethnicity. School two had 86.1% ( $n = 143$ ) identified White, 5.4% ( $n = 9$ ) identified Black, 3.0% ( $n = 5$ ) identified Hispanic, 3.6% ( $n = 6$ ) responded as other, 1.8% ( $n = 3$ ) instruments were missing data related to ethnicity. School three had 59.9% ( $n = 91$ ) identify as White, 31.6% ( $n = 48$ ) identify as Black, 1.3% ( $n = 2$ ) responded as Hispanic, 2.6% ( $n = 4$ ) responded as Other, 0.7% ( $n = 1$ ) responded as Asian, and 3.9% ( $n = 6$ ) were missing ethnicity data from school three. School four reported 50.8% ( $n = 93$ ) White, 43.7% ( $n = 80$ ) identified Black, 1.6% ( $n = 3$ ) identified as Hispanic, 2.2% ( $n = 4$ ) identified as Other, and 1.6% ( $n = 3$ ) were missing ethnicity

data from this school. School five responded with 2.3% ( $n = 1$ ) White, 88.4% ( $n = 38$ ) Black, and 9.3% ( $n = 4$ ) identified as Other.

Table 10

*Frequency and Percentages for Students by Ethnicity on Pre-Existing Needs Assessment Data provided to Researcher*

School	Ethnicity					
	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Asian	Missing
School One	105	50	2	1	0	6
	64.0%	30.5%	1.2%	0.6%	0%	3.7%
School Two	143	9	5	6	0	3
	86.1%	5.4%	3.0%	3.6%	0%	1.8%
School Three	91	48	2	4	1	6
	59.9%	31.6%	1.3%	2.6%	0.7%	3.9%
School Four	93	80	3	4	0	3
	50.8%	43.7%	1.6%	2.2%	0%	1.6%
School Five	1	38	0	4	0	0
	2.3%	88.4%	0%	9.3%	0%	0%

### **Student Grade Level Assignment**

Table 11 contains data pertaining to the grade level assignment of the students who completed the needs assessments for their respective schools. School one student participants consisted of 35.4% ( $n = 58$ ) in grades K–3, 62.8% ( $n = 103$ ) in grades 4–6, and 1.8% ( $n = 3$ )

were missing grade level assignment data. School two participants identified 18.1% ( $n = 30$ ) in grades K–3, 50.6% ( $n = 84$ ) responded in grades 4–6, 30.7% ( $n = 51$ ) responded in grades 7–9, and 0.6% ( $n = 1$ ) were missing grade level assignment data from this school. School three had 45.4% ( $n = 69$ ) respond from K–3 grade, 54.6% ( $n = 83$ ) respond from grades 4–6, and no missing data from this school. School four identified 60.1% ( $n = 110$ ) in grades 4–6, and 39.9% ( $n = 73$ ) responded from grades 7–9. There was no missing data from school four. School five identified 14.0% ( $n = 6$ ) in grades K–3, and 86.1% ( $n = 37$ ) responded in grades 4–6. There was no grade level assignment data missing from school five.

Table 11

*Frequency and Percentages for Students by Grade Level Assignment on Pre-Existing Needs Assessment Data provided to Researcher*

School	Grade Level Assignment				
	K–3	4–6	7–9	10–12	Missing
School One	58 35.4%	103 62.8%	0 0%	0 0%	3 1.8%
School Two	30 18.1%	84 50.6%	51 30.7%	0 0%	1 0.6%
School Three	69 45.4%	83 54.6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
School Four	0 0%	110 60.1%	73 39.9%	0 0%	0 0%
School Five	6 14.0%	37 86.1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%

The following demographic information for teachers was disaggregated and presented as part of the professional development session at each school.

### Teacher Gender

Table 12 identifies gender for each of the teacher participants who completed the needs assessment. School one had 78.6% ( $n = 22$ ) female teachers and 17.9% ( $n = 5$ ) male teachers respond. School two had 95.0% ( $n = 19$ ) female teachers, 0.0% ( $n = 0$ ) male teachers respond, and 5.0% ( $n = 1$ ) missing gender data. School three had 92.3% ( $n = 24$ ) female teachers, 0.0% ( $n = 0$ ) male teachers respond and 7.7% ( $n = 2$ ) missing gender data. School four had 70.8% ( $n = 17$ ) female teachers and 29.2% ( $n = 7$ ) male teachers complete the needs assessment. Finally, school five had 50.0% ( $n = 6$ ) female teachers and 50.0% ( $n = 6$ ) male teachers respond.

Table 12

*Frequency and Percentages for Teachers by Gender on Pre-Existing Needs Assessment Data provided to Researcher*

	School				
Gender	1	2	3	4	5
Female	22 78.6%	19 95.0%	24 92.3%	17 70.8%	6 50.0%
Male	5 17.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	7 29.2%	6 50.0%
Missing	1 3.6%	1 5.0%	2 7.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%

## Teacher Ethnicity

Table 13 defines the ethnicity of the teacher participants who completed the needs assessment in their respective schools. School one had 89.3% ( $n = 25$ ) identified White, 7.1% ( $n = 2$ ) Black, and 3.6% ( $n = 1$ ) missing ethnicity data. School two had 70.0% ( $n = 14$ ) identified White, 15.0% ( $n = 3$ ) identified Black, 5.0% ( $n = 1$ ) responded as Other, 10.0% ( $n = 2$ ) instruments were missing data related to ethnicity. School three had 76.9% ( $n = 20$ ) identify as White, 19.2% ( $n = 5$ ) identify as Black, and 3.8% ( $n = 1$ ) respond as Other. School four reported 58.3% ( $n = 14$ ) White, 37.5% ( $n = 9$ ) identified Black, and 4.2% ( $n = 1$ ) were missing ethnicity data from this school. School five responded with 66.7% ( $n = 8$ ) White, and 33.3% ( $n = 4$ ) Black teacher participants.

Table 13

*Frequency and Percentages for Teachers by Ethnicity on Pre-Existing Needs Assessment Data provided to Researcher*

School	Ethnicity					
	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Asian	Missing
School One	25	2	0	0	0	1
	89.3%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%
School Two	14	3	0	1	0	2
	70.0%	15.0%	0.0%	5.0%	0%	10.0%
School Three	20	5	0	1	0	0
	76.9%	19.2%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%

(table continues)

Table 13 (continued)

School	Ethnicity					
	White	Black	Hispanic	Other	Asian	Missing
School Four	14	9	0	0	0	1
	58.3%	37.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0%	4.2%
School Five	8	4	0	0	0	0
	66.7%	33.3%	0%	0.0%	0%	0%

### Teacher Grade Level Teaching Assignment

Table 14 data pertains to the grade level teaching assignment of the teachers who completed the needs assessments for their respective schools. School one teacher participants consisted of 35.8% ( $n = 10$ ) teaching grades K–3, 17.8% ( $n = 5$ ) teaching grades 4–6, 17.9% ( $n = 5$ ) taught grades 7–9, 21.4% ( $n = 6$ ) taught grades 10–12, and 7.1% ( $n = 2$ ) were missing grade level teaching assignment data. School two participants identified 25.0% ( $n = 5$ ) teaching grades K–3, 40.0% ( $n = 8$ ) teaching in grades 4–6, 15.0% ( $n = 3$ ) taught in grades 7–9, 15.0% ( $n = 3$ ) taught grades 10–12, and 5.0% ( $n = 1$ ) were missing grade level teaching assignment data from this school. School three had 76.9% ( $n = 20$ ) of teachers respond from K–3 grade, 19.2% ( $n = 5$ ) teachers respond from 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and no missing data from this school. School four identified 62.5% ( $n = 15$ ) taught in grades 4–6, and 16.7% ( $n = 4$ ) teachers responded from grades 7–9. There was 20.8% ( $n = 5$ ) missing teacher assignment data from school four. School five identified 41.6% ( $n = 5$ ) taught in grades K–3, and 16.6% ( $n = 2$ ) teachers responded from grades 4–6, 8.3% ( $n = 1$ ) teachers responded from grades 7–9, and 8.3% ( $n = 1$ ) teachers responded

from grades 10–12. There was 25.0% ( $n = 3$ ) of grade level teaching assignment data missing from school five.

Table 14

*Frequency and Percentages for Teachers by Grade Level Teaching Assignment on Pre-Existing Needs Assessment Data provided to Researcher*

School	Grade Level Teaching Assignment				
	K-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	Missing
School One	10	5	5	6	2
	35.8%	17.8%	17.8%	21.4%	7.1%
School Two	5	8	3	3	1
	25.0%	40.0%	15.0%	15.0%	5.0%
School Three	20	5	0	0	0
	76.9%	19.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
School Four	0	15	4	0	5
	0.0%	62.5%	16.7%	0.0%	20.8%
School Five	5	2	1	1	3
	41.6%	16.6%	8.3%	8.3%	25.0%

## Research Findings

### Perception

The following data in Table 15 detailed the gaps and similarities between the students and teachers of each school in regards to their perceptions of bullying. Descriptive statistics

were run to provide an accurate analysis for each of the schools during their individualized professional development sessions. Means, standard deviations, and results of the ANOVA between the student group (n = 708) and the teacher group (n = 110) were reported. The mean for the student group at School 1 was 2.66 ( $SD = .684$ ) and 2.69 ( $SD = .418$ ) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 2 was 2.70 ( $SD = .554$ ) and 2.67 ( $SD = .391$ ) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 3 was 2.71 ( $SD = .712$ ) and 2.44 ( $SD = .636$ ) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 4 was 2.73 ( $SD = .551$ ) and 2.97 ( $SD = .642$ ) for the teacher group, and at School 5 the mean was 2.76 ( $SD = .609$ ) for the student group and 2.65 ( $SD = .597$ ) for the teacher group.

Means for the student and teacher groups at School 4 were statistically significant ( $p = .05$ ) for perceptions of bullying at this school. The dependent variable, *bullying perception*, was different between the student and teacher groupings in only School 4. For School 4 the F statistic was 3.77 and  $\text{Eta}^2$  was .018. Student perception of bullying at School Four was lower than what was reported by teachers. Similar perceptions of bullying by students and teachers were found in School 1, School 2, School 3 and School 5.

The specific items that addressed perception still provided quality discussion points among teachers during the professional development session at each school. For instance, in four of the five participating schools, student participants found bullying to be more of an issue in their school than did the teachers. The most telling item within the perception domain was *Students feel safe at this school*. In three of the five schools, 50% or less of the students indicated that students felt safe at their school. While the perception of safety may not be related solely to bullying issues, it certainly needed to be discussed with teachers as an area which could create a safer, more nurturing, conducive learning environment.

Table 15

*Means, Standard Deviations, ANOVA, Eta<sup>2</sup> and Power for Student (n = 708) and Teacher (n = 110) Needs Assessment Bullying Perception Data*

School	Mean	SD	Mean Square	F	Eta <sup>2</sup>	p	Power
School One							
Student	2.66	.684			.000	.81	.056
Teacher	2.69	.418	0.023	.053			
School Two							
Student	2.70	.554	0.650		.012	.13	.318
Teacher	2.67	.391		2.23			
School Three							
Student	2.71	.712	1.52		.018	.08	.415
Teacher	2.44	.636		3.08			
School Four							
Student	2.73	.551	1.19		.018	.05	.489
Teacher	2.97	.642		3.77			
School Five							
Student	2.76	.609	.246		.003	.41	.128
Teacher	2.65	.597		.665			

## Prevalence

The data in Table 16 details the gaps and similarities between the students and teachers of each school in regards to bullying prevalence. Descriptive statistics were run to provide an

accurate analysis for each of the schools during their individualized professional development sessions. Means, standard deviations, and results of the ANOVA between the student group (n = 708) and the teacher group (n = 110) were reported. The mean for the student group at School 1 was 2.70 (*SD* = .661) and 3.02 (*SD* = .633) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 2 was 2.62 (*SD* = .540) and 2.87 (*SD* = .526) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 3 was 2.56 (*SD* = .638) and 2.67 (*SD* = .570) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 4 was 2.73 (*SD* = .551) and 2.97 (*SD* = .642) for the teacher group, and at School 5 the mean was 2.75 (*SD* = .572) for the student group and 2.93 (*SD* = .517) for the teacher group.

Table 16

*Means, Standard Deviations, ANOVA, Eta<sup>2</sup> and Power for Student (n = 708) and Teacher (n = 110) Needs Assessment Bullying Prevalence Data*

School	Mean	SD	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Eta <sup>2</sup>	<i>p</i>	Power
School One							
Student	2.70	.661	2.38		.03	< .01	.69
Staff	3.02	.633		6.10			
School Two							
Student	2.62	.540	1.17		.02	.04	.54
Staff	2.87	.526		4.30			
School Three							
Student	2.56	.638	.123		.00	.57	.08
Staff	2.67	.570		.311			

Table 16 (continued)

School	Mean	SD	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Eta <sup>2</sup>	<i>p</i>	Power
School Four							
Student	2.73	.551	1.19		.01	.05	.48
Staff	2.97	.642		3.77			
School Five							
Student	2.75	.572	.304		.018	.33	.162
Staff	2.93	.517		.967			

Means for the student and teacher groups in regards to the dependent variable, *bullying prevalence*, at School 1, School 2 and School 4 were statistically different. Bullying prevalence appeared to be a larger concern for teachers than for students. In Schools 3 and 5 it was not different.

For School 1 the *F* statistic was 6.10 and Eta<sup>2</sup> was .03, ( $p < .01$ ) for School 2 the *F* statistic was 4.30 and Eta<sup>2</sup> was .02 ( $p = .04$ ), School 4 the *F* statistic was 3.77 and Eta<sup>2</sup> was .018, ( $p = .05$ ). At these three schools students perceived the prevalence of bullying to be lower than the teacher's reporting of prevalence.

In these three schools teachers found the issue of bullying to be more of a problem than the students did. This could have been due to the level of bullying knowledge that the teachers had relative to the students and the teacher's ability to identify specific forms of bullying. The frequency of bullying was more alike between students and teachers than the reporting of types of bullying. For example, items that asked students questions about their experience with bullying as victims were far lower in frequency than the teacher response to items regarding

students being bullied. For instance, in the item *I have been excluded or left out on purpose at this school*, 47% of students have had this experience while teachers perceived that 93% of students have had this experience in School 1. School 2 responded with 51% of students and 94% of teachers. School 4 responded with 54% of students and 84% of teachers. There was a similar pattern of gaps for this item in the other two schools. In regards to student experience as victims of physical bullying and the teachers' perception of this form of victimization, the response to the following item *I (Students) have been hit, pushed, tripped or kicked on purpose at this school*, in School 1, 62% of students agreed with this item while 93% of teachers agreed; in School 2, 57% of students agreed with this item while 95% of teachers felt their students have experienced this form of bullying. In School 4, 58% of students agreed with this statement while 95% of the teachers felt their students had experienced this form of bullying. The gaps at the other two schools for this particular item were at least by 25% between students and teachers.

Gaps such as these could be attributed to low self reporting. It is not uncommon for students who are victims of bullying to keep it to themselves and not report it.

In schools with reported gaps between teachers and students a portion of the professional development was designed around creating safe, anonymous methods for student reporting and helping to increase awareness among students as well as increase their intolerance to bullying. School 1 and School 2 were K–12 settings, and School 4 was a grade 5–7 setting. School 3, which did not have statistical significance in the prevalence domain, was a grade K–4 setting. This may have directly affected the prevalence reporting of the student responses.

## **Beliefs**

The data in Table 17 detailed the gaps and similarities between the students and teachers of each school in regards to bullying beliefs. Descriptive statistics were run to provide an

accurate analysis for each of the schools during their individualized professional development sessions. Means, standard deviations, and results of the ANOVA between the student group (n = 708) and the teacher group (n = 110) were reported (Table 18). The mean for the student group at School 1 was 2.63 (*SD* = .448) and 3.04 (*SD* = .308) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 2 was 2.62 (*SD* = .470) and 3.02 (*SD* = .302) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 3 was 2.61 (*SD* = .465) and 3.03 (*SD* = .359) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 4 was 2.62 (*SD* = .366) and 3.15 (*SD* = .329) for the teacher group, and at School 5 the mean was 2.44 (*SD* = .507) for the student group and 3.19 (*SD* = .355) for the teacher group.

Table 17

*Means, Standard Deviations, ANOVA, Eta<sup>2</sup> and Power for Student (n = 708) and Teacher (n = 110) Needs Assessment Beliefs about Bullying Data*

School	Beliefs						
	Mean	SD	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Eta2	<i>p</i>	Power
School One							
Student	2.63	.448	3.954	21.32	.10	<.001	.99
Teacher	3.04	.308					
School Two							
Student	2.62	.470	2.77	13.42	.07	<.001	.95
Teacher	3.02	.302					

(table continues)

Table 17 (continued)

School	Beliefs						
	Mean	SD	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Eta2	<i>p</i>	Power
School Three							
Student	2.61	.465	3.83	18.82	.09	<.001	.99
Teacher	3.03	.359					
School Four							
Student	2.62	.366	5.64	43.10	.17	<.001	1.00
Teacher	3.15	.329					
School Five							
Student	2.44	.507	5.31	23.05	.30	<.001	.997
Teacher	3.19	.355					

Means for the student and teacher groups at all five schools were significantly different ( $p = .05$ ) for beliefs about bullying. For School 1 the *F* statistic was 21.32 and  $\text{Eta}^2$  was .10, for School 2 the *F* statistic was 13.42 and  $\text{Eta}^2$  was .07, for School 3 the *F* statistic was 18.82 and  $\text{Eta}^2$  was .09, for School 4 the *F* statistic was 43.10 and  $\text{Eta}^2$  was .17, and for School 5 the *F* statistic was 23.05 and  $\text{Eta}^2$  was .30. At all five schools the teachers reported higher mean values for beliefs than did the students.

In all five schools, the gaps between the student and teachers beliefs were statistically significant. The dependent variable of bullying beliefs was different between the student and teacher groupings in schools 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. In each of the five schools teacher means were significantly higher than means for students. The gaps in this domain pertain to items such as

beliefs about bullying being normal, victims of bullying bringing it on themselves, and how bullying should be handled. While all of the domains stand alone, they are also interrelated. Student perceptions about bullying and the origination of bullying behavior have affected their beliefs. A portion of the professional development provided in each school in regards to bullying beliefs included curriculum approaches that would increase bullying knowledge for students. Two items within the beliefs domain that were a concern of the researcher were *Victims of bullying bring it on themselves* and *Bullying is a normal part of growing up*. In four out of five schools, more than 50% of the students who responded believed this to be true, while teacher responses in any one of the five schools were no more than 11% in agreement with this statement.

## **Prevention**

The prevention data presented in Table 18 were used to design the professional development for each school. The following data details the gaps and similarities between the students and teachers of each school in regards to bullying prevention. Descriptive statistics were run to provide an accurate analysis for each of the schools during their individualized professional development sessions. Means, standard deviations, and results of the ANOVA between the student group (n = 708) and the teacher group (n = 110) were reported (Table 19). The mean for the student group at School 1 was 3.01 ( $SD = .554$ ) and 2.82 ( $SD = .316$ ) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 2 was 3.03 ( $SD = .461$ ) and 2.94 ( $SD = .309$ ) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 3 was 2.87 ( $SD = .604$ ) and 3.16 ( $SD = .396$ ) for the teacher group. The mean for the student group at School 4 was 2.80 ( $SD = .550$ ) and 3.02 ( $SD = .426$ ) for the teacher group, and at School 5 the mean was 2.78 ( $SD = .554$ ) for the student group and 2.87 ( $SD = .312$ ) for the teacher group.

Table 18

*Means, Standard Deviations, ANOVA, Eta<sup>2</sup> and Power for Student (n = 708) and Teacher (n = 110) Needs Assessments Bullying Prevention Data*

School	Mean	SD	Mean Square	F	Eta <sup>2</sup>	p	Power
School One							
Student	3.01	.554	.886	3.19	.01	.07	.428
Teacher	2.82	.316					
School Two							
Student	3.03	.461	.121	.604	.00	.43	.121
Teacher	2.94	.309					
School Three							
Student	2.87	.604	1.81	5.41	.03	.02	.638
Teacher	3.16	.396					
School Four							
Student	2.80	.550	1.11	3.84	.01	.05	.496
Teacher	3.02	.426					
School Five							
Student	2.78	.554	.075	.286	.00	.59	.082
Teacher	2.87	.312					

Means for the student and teacher groups at School 3 and School 4 were significantly different ( $p = .05$ ) for perceptions of how to intervene in bullying. The dependent variable of bullying prevention was different between the student and teacher groupings in schools 3 and 4.

In Schools 1, 2 and 5 it was not different. For School 3 the F statistic was 5.41 and  $\text{Eta}^2$  was .03, and for School 4 the F statistic was 3.84 and  $\text{Eta}^2$  was .01. At schools 1, 2 and 5 there was no significant difference between student and teacher perceptions of bullying prevention.

Data for School 3 and School 4 was statistically significant in the area of prevention. It is important to note that School 3 was a grade K–4 setting and student responses regarding prevention may have been affected by the grade structure of the school. Items within this domain include *Students who witness bullying tell an adult* and *When adults see bullying they intervene*. The professional development sessions addressed methods of reporting and intervening. Additionally, preventative measures were further defined as reactive and proactive. The gaps within this domain could also have been further exacerbated by the students' lack of awareness of teacher's responses to bullying. An important portion of the professional development session was the importance of including student voice in prevention efforts as well as sharing specific measures that could be implemented that would increase student ownership in the school-wide prevention efforts.

The results of this data were used to design school specific professional development based on current realities and needs within each school. It was the goal of the researcher to determine if there were relationships or gaps between the students and teachers of each school in relation to the defined domains of perception, prevalence, beliefs and prevention. These gaps were used to further define and guide the approach during the professional development session at each school.

During Phase 2 the researcher addressed research questions two and three. The researcher collected perception data using the BSEI. This data was collected from the comparison and treatment group within each school before or after the professional development

session. It was the goal of the researcher to determine the effectiveness of school specific professional development provided to teachers at each participating school. The independent variable was the school specific professional development and included the following domains:

- Knowledge
- Beliefs

The dependent variable in research question two was the change in knowledge from prior to the professional development experience to after the professional development experience.

Table 19 defines the frequency and percentages for participants by school, given a comparison and treatment group design. The comparison group had 19.6% ( $n = 19$ ) identified from school one, 23.7% ( $n = 23$ ) from school two, 16.5% ( $n = 16$ ) from school three, 11.3% ( $n = 11$ ) from school four, and 11.3% ( $n = 11$ ) from school five. The treatment group identified 18.6% ( $n = 18$ ) from school one, 25.8% ( $n = 25$ ) from school two, 17.5% ( $n = 17$ ) from school three, 12.4% ( $n = 12$ ) from school four, and 9.3% ( $n = 9$ ) from school five. There was no missing data.

Table 19

*Frequency and Percentages for Participants by School ( $n=161$ ) given a Comparison/Treatment Design*

Group	School				
	1	2	3	4	5
Comparison	19	23	16	11	11
	19.6%	23.7%	16.5%	11.3%	11.3%
Treatment	18	25	17	12	9
	18.6%	25.8%	17.5%	12.4%	9.3%

Gender data for participants is presented in Table 20. The comparison group had 81.3% ( $n = 65$ ) females and 15.0% ( $n = 12$ ) males. There were 3.8% ( $n = 3$ ) missing data regarding gender in this group. The treatment group had 75.3% ( $n = 61$ ) females and 17.3% ( $n = 14$ ) males. There were 7.4% ( $n = 6$ ) missing data.

Table 20

*Frequency and Percentages for Participants by Gender ( $n = 161$ ) given a Comparison/Treatment Design*

Group	Gender		
	Female	Male	Missing
Comparison	65	12	3
	81.3%	15.0%	3.8%
Treatment	61	14	6
	75.3%	17.3%	7.4%

Note: Although three cases in comparison group and six cases in the treatment group were missing data related to gender, the researcher included the cases since they were identified as being in their respective randomly assigned groups.

Table 21 provides the ethnicity preference for participants given a comparison and treatment group design. The comparison group indicated 76.3% ( $n = 61$ ) White, 22.5% ( $n = 18$ ) Black, and 1.3% ( $n = 1$ ) Other. The treatment group indicated 80.2% ( $n = 65$ ) White, 14.8% ( $n = 12$ ) Black, and 1.2% ( $n = 1$ ) Other. The treatment group was missing 3.7% ( $n = 3$ ) data related

to ethnicity. These findings indicated that for ethnicity preference, the two randomly assigned groups used for the study were similar.

Table 21

*Frequency and Percentages for Participants by Ethnicity (n = 161) given a Comparison/Treatment Design*

Group	Ethnicity			Missing
	White	Black	Other	
Comparison	61 76.3%	18 22.5%	1 1.3%	0
Treatment	65 80.2%	12 14.8%	1 1.2%	3 3.7%

Note: Although three cases in the treatment group were missing data related to ethnicity, the researcher included the cases since they were identified as being in their respective randomly assigned groups.

Data pertaining to highest degree held by participants is presented in Table 22. For teachers randomly assigned to the comparison group, the following preferences were identified in relation to highest degree held. Teachers who held Bachelor's degrees were 38.8% ( $n = 31$ ), 45.0% ( $n = 36$ ) held Master's degrees, 2.5% ( $n = 2$ ) held Specialist's degrees, and 7.5% ( $n = 6$ ) indicated a response of Other. The comparison group had five cases, 6.3% missing data related to degree held. The degree held preferences for the treatment group were as follows: 49.4% ( $n = 40$ ) held Bachelor's degrees, 37.0% ( $n = 30$ ) held Master's degrees, 7.4% ( $n = 6$ ) held

Specialist's degrees, 4.9% ( $n = 4$ ) indicated a response of Other. There was one missing case, 1.2% ( $n = 1$ ) in the treatment group.

Table 22

*Frequency and Percentages for Participants by Highest Degree ( $n=161$ ) given a Comparison/Treatment Design*

	Highest Degree				
	Bachelor's	Master's	Education Specialist	Doctorate	Other
Comparison	31 38.8%	36 45.0%	2 2.5%	0	6 7.5%
Treatment	40 49.4%	30 37.0%	6 7.4%	0	4 4.9%

Note: Although five cases in the comparison group were missing data related to degree and one case in the treatment group, the researcher included the cases since they were identified as being in their respective randomly assigned groups.

Data relating to years of teaching experience for participants given a comparison and treatment group design is provided in Table 23. The comparison group participants indicated that 49.5% ( $n = 48$ ) had been teaching ten years or less while the treatment group participants responded that 43.2% ( $n = 42$ ) had ten years experience or less. The response from the comparison group regarding 11–20 years experience was 23.7% ( $n = 23$ ), while the treatment group indicated 35.1% ( $n = 34$ ) had 11–20 years experience. Finally, the two groups indicated they had 24.7% ( $n = 24$ ) and 16.5% ( $n = 16$ ) teachers with more than 20 years experience. The

comparison group had 2.1% ( $n = 2$ ) missing data pertaining to years of experience and the treatment group had 5.2% ( $n = 5$ ) missing teaching experience data.

Table 23

*Frequency and Percentages for Participants by Teaching Experience in Years ( $n = 161$ ) given a Comparison/Treatment Design*

Group	Years of Experience			
	0–10	11–20	21+	Missing
Comparison	38 47.5%	20 25.0%	20 25.0%	2 2.5%
Treatment	32 39.5%	30 37.0%	15 18.5%	4 4.9%

Note: Although two cases in the comparison group were missing data related to experience and four cases in the treatment group, the researcher included the cases since they were identified as being in their respective randomly assigned groups.

Table 24 defines the grade level taught by participants in the comparison and treatment group within each school. The following demographic data describes the grade level taught within each group. The comparison group indicated that 52.7% ( $n = 42$ ) taught K–5 grade while the treatment group indicated that 41.9% ( $n = 34$ ) taught K–5 grade. The comparison group identified 17.6% ( $n = 14$ ) participants taught 6–8 grade and the treatment group 22.2% ( $n = 18$ ). The two groups indicated respectively that the following number of participants taught 9–12 grade, 8.8% ( $n = 7$ ) and 11.1% ( $n = 9$ ). The demographic data in the area of grade level taught

was missing the largest amount of data from both groups. The comparison group was missing 21.3% ( $n = 17$ ) and the treatment group was missing 24.7% ( $n = 20$ ).

Table 24

*Frequency and Percentages for Participants by Grade Level Taught ( $n = 161$ ) given a Comparison/Treatment Design*

Group	Grade Level Taught			
	K-5	6-8	9-12	Missing
Comparison	42	14	7	17
	52.7%	17.6%	8.8%	21.3%
Treatment	34	18	9	20
	41.9%	22.2%	11.1%	24.7%

*Note.* Although 17 cases in the comparison group were missing data related to grade level taught and 20 cases in the treatment group, the researcher included the cases since they were identified as being in their respective randomly assigned groups.

The analysis of descriptive statistics and frequencies allowed the researcher to infer the makeup of the two groups were very similar across all areas of demographic data. Although systematic randomization was the method used to create the participant groups, the fact that the comparison and treatment groups were so similar lends additional merit to the success of the intervention.

Table 25 presents data used to answer research question two. The second research question considered the difference between the comparison and treatment group in the

knowledge domain. The 80 participants in the comparison group had a mean of 2.84 ( $SD = .756$ ) in the Knowledge domain. The 81 participants in the treatment group had a mean of 3.33 ( $SD = .464$ ) in the Knowledge domain. Using the one way ANOVA, there was a statistically significant difference within the Knowledge domain between the comparison and the treatment group  $F(1, 192) = 29.41, p < 0.001$ .

**Research Question Two: When using bullying data specific to the school in a professional development session, is there a difference in bullying knowledge between the staff treatment group and the staff comparison group?**

Table 25

*Means, Standard Deviations, One-way ANOVA for Teacher Knowledge given a Treatment/Comparison Design*

Knowledge							
Group	Mean	SD	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Eta <sup>2</sup>	<i>P</i>	Power
Comparison	2.84	.756					
Treatment	3.32	.464					
Group			11.59	29.41	.133	< .001	1.00

Table 26 presents data used to answer research question three. The third research question analyzed the difference between the comparison and treatment group in the beliefs domain based on the school specific professional development, utilizing the BSEI data from each participating school. The 80 participants in the comparison group had a mean of 3.03 ( $SD = .390$ ) in the Beliefs domain. The 81 participants in the treatment group had a mean of 3.30 ( $SD =$

.347) in the Beliefs domain. Using the one-way ANOVA, the results were statistically significant for the Beliefs domain between the comparison and the treatment group,  $F(1,192) = 26.29, p < 0.001$ .

**Research Question Three: When using bullying data specific to the school in a professional development session, is there a difference in bullying beliefs between the teacher treatment group and the teacher comparison group?**

Table 26

*Means, Standard Deviations, One-way ANOVA for Teacher Beliefs given a Treatment/Comparison Design*

Beliefs							
Group	Mean	SD	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Eta <sup>2</sup>	<i>P</i>	Power
Comparison	3.03	.346					
Treatment	3.30	.347					
Group			3.58	26.29	.120	<.001	1.00

Based on the research findings in the two domains of the study, participant’s knowledge and beliefs, the professional development provided as the study treatment was very successful. The data driven design of the professional development session increased the knowledge and the positively held beliefs of the teachers randomly assigned to the treatment group within each school. Previously held assumptions and mental models were, in fact much different than the research based information that the professional development provided. By sharing school specific data with each of the participating schools, the ownership of the teachers to engage and

participate in the problem solving was increased. As a result, the teachers at each school were able to more effectively address bullying issues as they presented themselves. Although the comparison group completed the BSEI prior to participating in the professional development, teachers' school wide benefited from the professional development treatment.

Based on the statistically significant findings from the BSEI, the researcher saw merit in offering a follow-up session at each site to provide additional information on the value of creating and functioning as a professional learning community in order to address school issues such as bullying. Therefore, Phase 3 of the study included research questions four and five.

**Research Question Four: Would bullying knowledge be correlated to the teachers' perception of their school as a learning community?**

In the follow-up session provided to each school, the researcher was able to collect additional data in the area of professional learning communities. Here the researcher considered the possibility of correlations between participants bullying knowledge and beliefs and their function as a professional learning community. A correlation is considered a descriptive statistic and a measure of the strength of association between two variables. A *Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient* is a statistic used to assess how well two continuous variables correspond in terms of high and low values (Ross & Shannon, 2008). Correlations are said to be strong if the value of  $\rho$  is -1.0 to -0.5 or 1.0 to 0.5. Correlations are said to be moderate if the value of  $\rho$  is -0.5 to -0.3 or 0.3 to 0.5. Correlations are said to be weak if the value of  $\rho$  is -0.3 to -0.1 or 0.1 to 0.3. Correlations are said to be very weak or nonexistent if the value of  $\rho$  is -0.1 to 0.1 (Cohen, 1988).

Table 27 presents the correlation data between the teachers' bullying knowledge and perception of professional learning communities within each school. In School 1 ( $n = 37$ )

teacher bullying knowledge and the school as a professional learning community Pearson r correlation was .423 ( $p = .009$ ). In School 2 ( $n = 48$ ) teacher bullying knowledge and the school as a professional learning community Pearson r correlation was .598 ( $p = .001$ ) and in School 3 ( $n = 33$ ) teacher bullying knowledge and the school as a professional learning community Pearson r correlation was .371 ( $p = .034$ ). In School 5 ( $n = 20$ ) teacher bullying knowledge and the school as a professional learning community Pearson r correlation was .581 ( $p = .007$ ). In School 4 ( $n = 23$ ) teacher bullying knowledge and the school as a professional learning community Pearson r correlation was .278 ( $p = .20$ ) (Table 28). There was a strong correlation between bullying knowledge and professional learning communities in School 2 and School 5. There was a medium correlation between bullying knowledge and professional learning communities in School 1 and School 3. In 80% or four out of five schools, teachers saw a linear dependence of bullying knowledge and their school as a learning community.

Table 27

*Correlations between the Teachers' Bullying Knowledge and Perception of Professional Learning Communities within Individual Schools*

School	Knowledge		
	Pearson Correlation	<i>P</i>	N
One			
PLC	.423**	.009	37
Two			
PLC	.598**	< .001	48

(table continues)

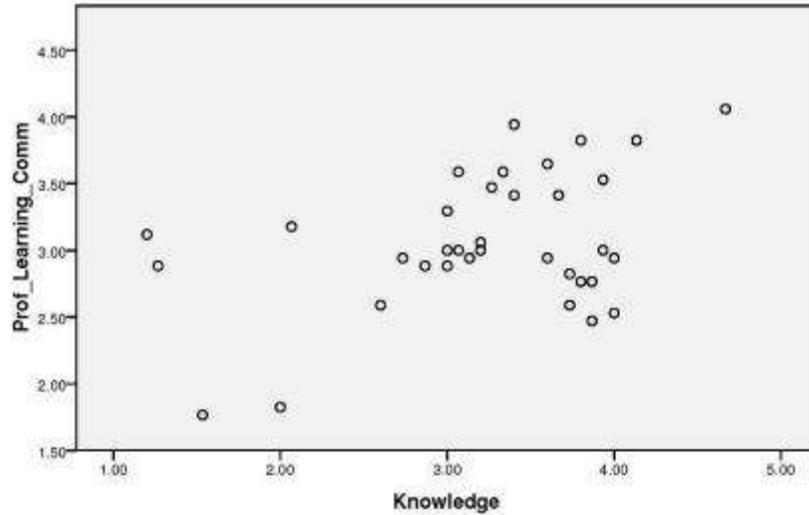
Table 27 (continued)

School	Knowledge		
	Pearson Correlation	<i>P</i>	N
Three			
PLC	.371*	.034	33
Four			
PLC	.278	.200	23
Five			
PLC	.581**	.007	20

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

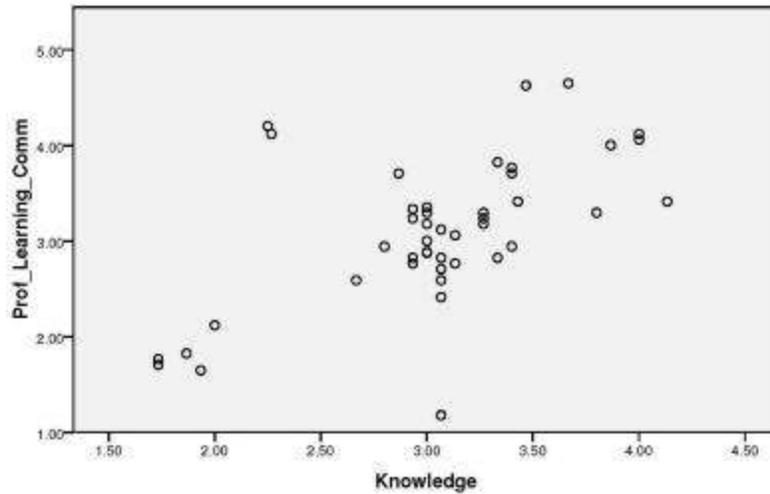
\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The following figures are scatter plots of the individual cases within each of the participating schools. The x-coordinate, which is equal to the value of one variable, is the bullying knowledge data and the y-coordinate, equal to the value of another variable, is the professional learning community data.



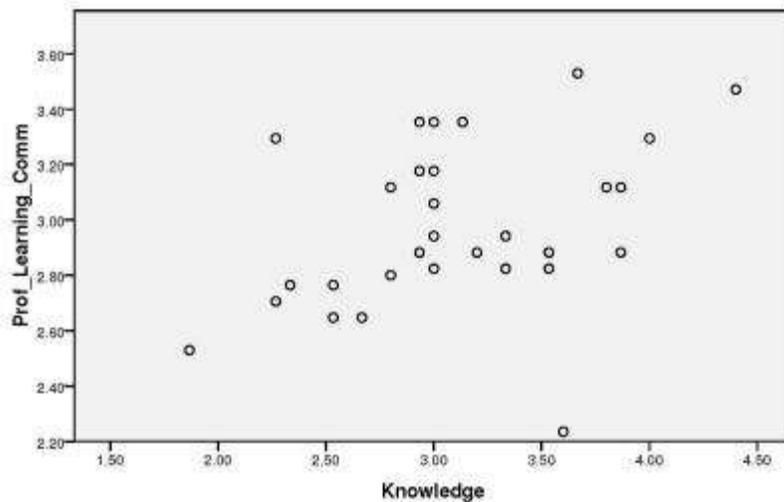
*Figure 3.* Correlation between School One Teachers Bullying Knowledge and Their Perception of Their School as a Professional Learning Community.

In an effort to confirm the Pearson  $r$  correlation, scatter plots were run on each of the schools' data regarding bullying knowledge and the teachers' perception of their school as a professional learning community. The preceding figure depicts the medium linear correlation for School 1. The x-coordinate is bullying knowledge and the y-coordinate is professional learning community.



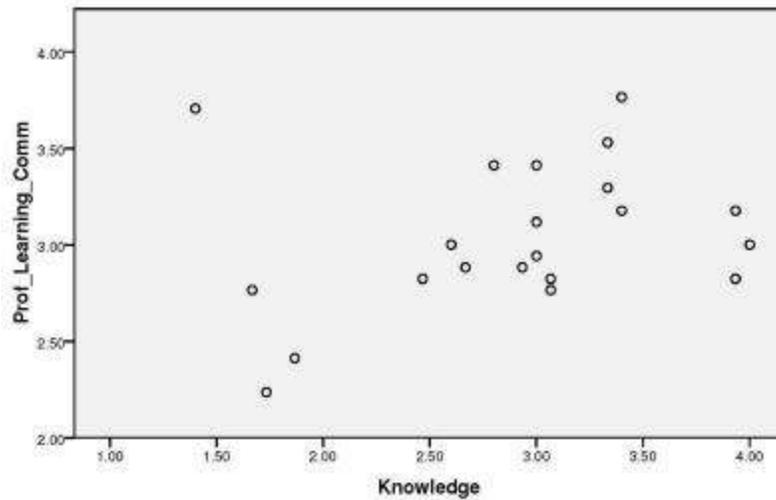
*Figure 4.* Correlation between School Two Teachers Bullying Knowledge and Their Perception of Their School as a Professional Learning Community

The scatter plot depicting the data from School 2 shows a stronger linear relationship in the arrangement and pattern of the variable values. There are clusters of data points in the center of the preceding figure but the overall trend is positive.



*Figure 5.* Correlation between School Three Teachers Bullying Knowledge and Their Perception of Their School as a Professional Learning Community

The scatter plot containing data from School 3 showed a medium relationship between variables. While there appears to be a positive linear trend the data points were not in as tight of a formation.



*Figure 6.* Correlation between School Four teachers' bullying knowledge and their perception of their school as a professional learning community

The scatter plot for School 4 displayed a weak relationship between the data points. Additionally, there was an outlier depicted in one case.



School Five (n = 20) teacher bullying beliefs and the school as a professional learning community Pearson r correlation was .102 (p = .668) (Table 29). There was a strong correlation between bullying beliefs and professional learning communities in School Two and School Four. There was a medium correlation between bullying beliefs and professional learning communities in School One. In three of the five schools, teachers saw a linear dependence of bullying beliefs and their school as a learning community.

Table 28

*Correlations between the Teacher's Beliefs about Bullying and Perception of Professional Learning Communities within Individual Schools*

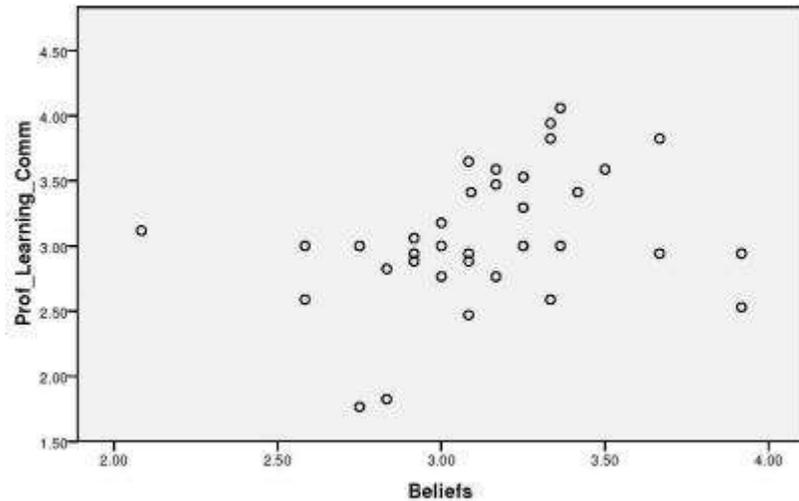
School	Beliefs		
	Pearson Correlation	P	N
One			
PLC	.301	.071	37
Two			
PLC	.511**	< .001	48
Three			
PLC	-.156	.387	33
Four			
PLC	.473*	.023	23
Five			
PLC	.102	.668	20

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

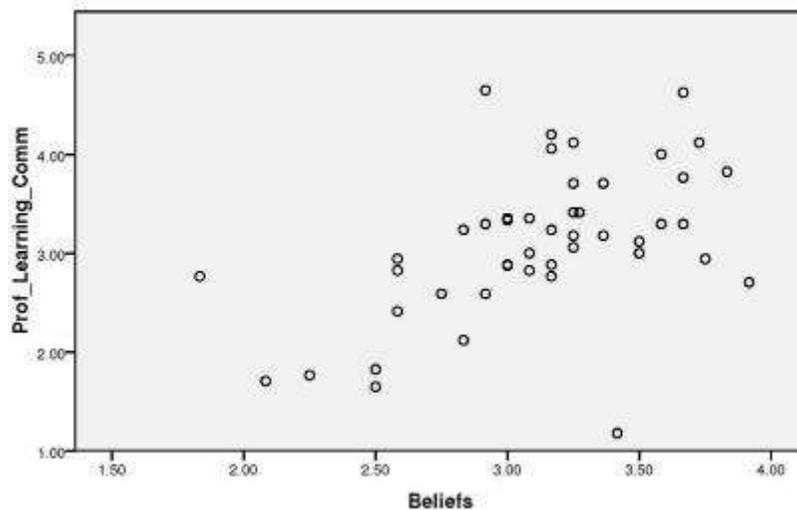
In question five the researcher was interested in knowing whether there was a correlation between the study participant's beliefs about bullying and their perception of their individual schools' ability to function as a professional learning community. In School Three data indicated a weak correlation between the domain of beliefs and professional learning community. School Three had a negative correlation between these two domains. The correlation was weak but it is worth mentioning because the high values of one variable corresponded to low values of the other variable (Ross & Shannon, 2008). In School Five it appeared that there was a minimal, if any, relationship between the positively held beliefs of the individual participants and their perception of their schools' function as a professional learning community. This information by no means should devalue the use of professional learning communities to solve school related issues such as bullying.

The following figures are scatter plots of the individual cases within each of the participating schools. The x-coordinate, which is equal to the value of one variable, is the bullying beliefs data and the y-coordinate, equal to the value of another variable, is the professional learning community data.



*Figure 8.* Correlation between School One teachers bullying beliefs and their perception of their school as a professional learning community

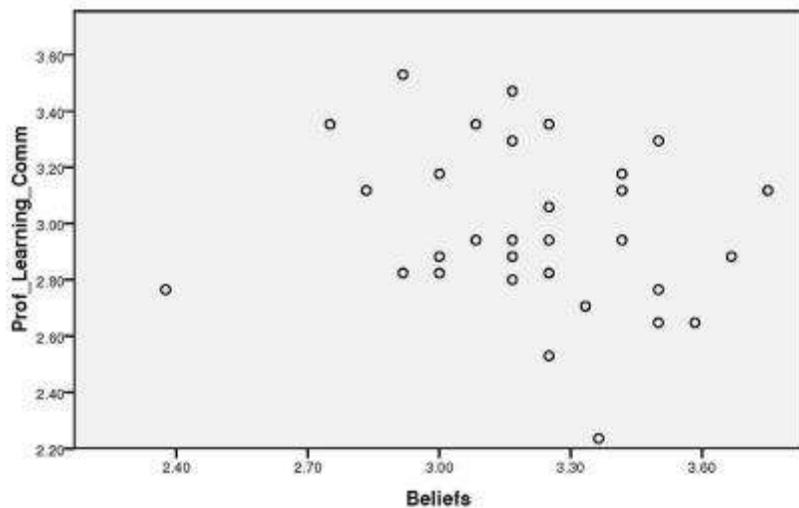
The scatter plot preceding demonstrates the relationship defined numerically in the Pearson r correlations. School 1 showed a medium correlation between teacher bullying beliefs and their perception of their school as a professional learning community. The depiction is linear and showed a positive trend.



*Figure 9.* Correlation between School Two teachers bullying beliefs and their perception of their school as a professional learning community

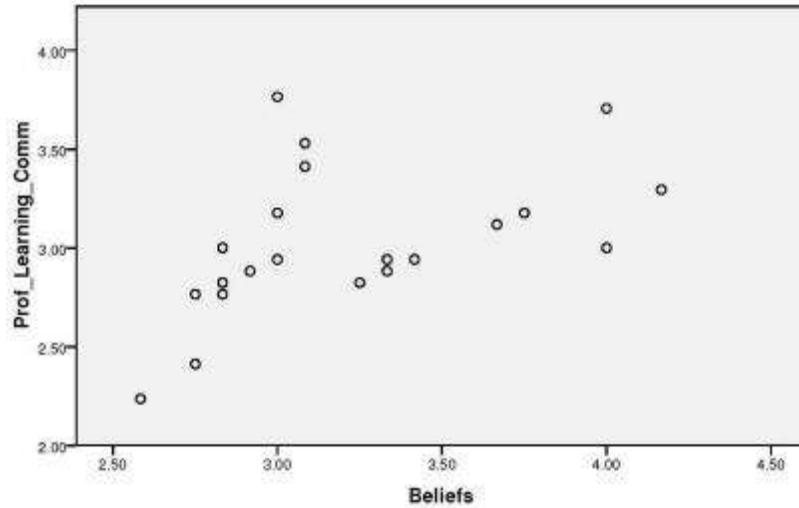
The scatter plot for School 2 shows a strong positive trend between the two variables.

Data points are clustered within the figure and the relationship is strong.



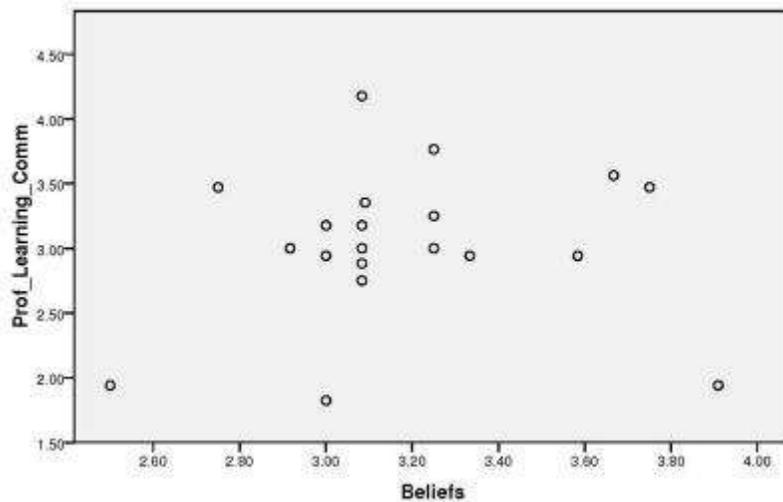
*Figure 10.* Correlation between School Three Teachers Bullying Beliefs and Their Perception of Their School as a Professional Learning Community

The preceding scatterplot shows a very weak if any relationship between the variables of bullying beliefs and teacher perception of their school as a professional learning community. The data point relationship, while weak, shows a negative trend. This is very apparent when comparing the scatter plots for the other four schools.



*Figure 11.* Correlation between School Four Teachers Bullying Beliefs and Their Perception of Their School as a Professional Learning Community

In School Four, there appeared to be a strong positive trend between the bullying beliefs and the teacher perceptions of their school as a professional learning community. The relationship is linear in nature.



*Figure 12.* Correlation between School Five Teachers Bullying Beliefs and Their Perception of Their School as a Professional Learning Community

The scatter plot for School Five does not show a linear relationship between the two study variables. While there does appear to be clusters of data points, there is not a pattern of linearity that is positive or negative in nature.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter contained the results of the present study. Phase 1 considered the needs assessment data provided to the researcher for building staff development sessions for each school. Research Question 1 was foundational to this study. Question 1 provided the data to design the professional development for individual schools. Phase 2 considered the effectiveness of the professional development at each school. In Phase 2 Research Questions 2 and 3 determined if the professional development on bullying knowledge and beliefs was an effective tool. Since it appeared the professional development was effective in both bullying knowledge and beliefs Phase 3 of the study was attempted. In Phase 3 the researcher sought to determine if teachers considered bullying knowledge and beliefs to be correlated to their school as a professional learning community. No strong correlations were found but a number of medium correlations were found. Bullying knowledge was found to be correlated to the school as a professional learning community in four of the five schools. Bullying beliefs were found to be correlated to the school as a professional learning community in three of the five schools.

Chapter five presents a discussion of this study, implications of the findings and provides recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine if professional development, using school contextual data, would bring deeper understanding to the important issue of student bullying. There were three phases to the study: analyze the pre existing bullying needs assessment data and build a professional development session tailored for each of the five schools; provide the professional development and evaluate the treatment data for relationships between the treatment and comparison groups; and provide a follow-up session to determine if there was a relationship between teacher's bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs and their perceptions of their school as a professional learning community. This chapter presents a summary of the study and important conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapter IV. It provides a discussion of the implications for action and recommendations for further research.

### **Summary of Instrument Development**

The development of the three instruments, as well as the individual measures was outlined in Chapter III. In phase one of the study, the participating system asked permission to use the needs assessment instruments for students and teachers, previously created by the researcher. The domains used to analyze the needs assessment data for the purpose of designing the school specific professional development were perceptions, prevalence, beliefs, and prevention. Relationships were determined within this data and were used to design professional development sessions unique to each participating school.

For phase two of this study, the Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument (BSEI) was designed for the purpose of capturing the bullying knowledge and belief changes as a result of the provided professional development, uniquely designed for each school. The BSEI included the domains of: bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs. The researcher wanted to determine if there was a positive relationship between the intervention or the school specific professional development, and the teacher's knowledge about bullying and their bullying beliefs. The two domains covered on the BSEI also represented the empirical framework of existing studies relative to bullying perception, prevalence, beliefs, and prevention (Andreou, 2001; Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010; Benbenishty & Astor, 2008; Bru, Stephens, & Torsheim, 2002; Coloroso, 2008; Dake, Price, & Telljohann, 2003; Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Olweus, 2003; Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009; Williams, 2007).

After conducting the professional development session and collecting the data from the BSEI, the researcher provided each participating school with a follow-up session pertaining to professional learning communities and their value in addressing school related issues such as bullying. At the conclusion of this follow-up session, the researcher invited the participants to complete the Indicators of Professional Learning Communities Instrument (IPLCI). This data was analyzed to determine if there was a correlation of bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs with teachers' perceptions of their school as a learning community. The IPLCI was designed using the dimensions defined by Hord and Sommers (2009) work. The five dimensions they defined within the domain of professional learning communities were shared beliefs, values, and vision; shared and supportive leadership; collective learning and its application; supportive conditions; and shared personal practice.

A rigorous process of development was used to design the instruments. Content validity was established using expert panel discussions, engaging in conversations with practitioners, and conducting meetings with committee members. The panel made several revisions to the instruments to make the questions clearer and more concise. After initial development, the instruments were field tested and completion was timed to ensure concise time commitments as well as gain input from the field test site participants.

A Cronbach alpha of .60 or higher is considered to be a generally accepted standard for measures assessing group differences. The reliability coefficients of the instruments ranged from .835 to .946 on each of the two domains on the BSEI which strongly substantiates the internal consistency of this instrument. Additionally, four of the five domains on the IPLCI follow-up instrument had reliability coefficients of .757 to .837. Only one domain, the Collective Learning and its Application, had a reliability coefficient of .460, which is lower than the generally acceptable standard.

For this study, the instruments were distributed and the responses collected, using a paper pencil delivery and response method. The needs assessment data was provided to the researcher from each school leadership team. The researcher was present for the dissemination and collection of the BSEI and the IPLCI instruments and each school. The return rate for the two study instruments was very high due to the paper pencil method, the researcher presence, and the group administration of each instrument following the two sessions of professional development. The most appropriate statistical method for this study was determined to be one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) between the two groups of participants, using the F-test statistic. The researcher utilized the statistical analysis procedures of descriptive statistics programs in the

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 18.0. Responses from the 161 participants were entered into SPSS and all analyses were performed using the SPSS 18.0.

### **Summary and Discussion of Demographic Findings**

The Human Resource department from the participating school system and the state department of education supplied the information pertaining to the number of certified teachers currently employed in the participating school system. The system identified in this study had 251 certified teachers in their population. The researcher supplied an informational letter to the teachers in the participating system along with the BSEI. The instructions for the instrument were clearly stated at the top of the instrument. The professional development was not voluntary as it was part of a professional requirement as a component of their school improvement plan. The completed, submitted instruments served as their consent to participate.

A total of 161 respondents participated by completing the BSEI and therefore represented the sample population for this study. The completion rate for the system was 64.1% (161 out of 251 teachers). The participants were teachers from a public school system located in [INSERT STATE NAME].

The study participants were assigned to the comparison and the treatment groups using systematic randomization. For gender, the comparison group had 81.3% ( $n = 65$ ) females and 15.0% ( $n = 12$ ) males. There were 3.8% ( $n = 3$ ) missing data regarding gender in this group. The treatment group had 75.3% ( $n = 61$ ) females and 17.3% ( $n = 14$ ) males. There were 7.4% ( $n = 6$ ) missing data. The sample population for gender was comparable for both groups. Although both groups had cases missing demographic data in the area of gender, the researcher was able to use the cases in reporting findings from the study as they identified with their specific school.

The findings for ethnicity preferences for each group revealed that the comparison group indicated 76.3% ( $n = 61$ ) White, 22.5% ( $n = 18$ ) Black, and 1.3% ( $n = 1$ ) Other. The treatment group indicated 80.2% ( $n = 65$ ) White, 14.8% ( $n = 12$ ) Black, and 1.2% ( $n = 1$ ) Other. The treatment group was missing 3.7% ( $n = 3$ ) data related to ethnicity. These findings indicated that for ethnicity preference, the two randomly assigned groups used for the study were similar.

For teachers randomly assigned to the comparison group, the following preferences were identified in relation to highest degree held. Teachers who held Bachelor's degrees were 38.8% ( $n = 31$ ), 45.0% ( $n = 36$ ) held Master's degrees, 2.5% ( $n = 2$ ) held Specialist's degrees, and 7.5% ( $n = 6$ ) indicated a response of Other. The comparison group had five cases, 6.3% missing data related to degree held. The degree held preferences for the treatment group were as follows: 49.4% ( $n = 40$ ) held Bachelor's degrees, 37.0% ( $n = 30$ ) held Master's degrees, 7.4% ( $n = 6$ ) held Specialist's degrees, 4.9% ( $n = 4$ ) indicated a response of Other. There was one missing case, 1.2% ( $n = 1$ ) in the treatment group.

The comparison group participants indicated that 49.5% ( $n = 48$ ) had been teaching ten years or less while the treatment group participants responded that 43.2% ( $n = 42$ ) had ten years experience or less. The response from the comparison group regarding 11–20 years' experience was 23.7% ( $n = 23$ ), while the treatment group indicated 35.1% ( $n = 34$ ) had 11–20 years' experience. Finally, the two groups indicated they had 24.7% ( $n = 24$ ) and 16.5% ( $n = 16$ ) teachers with more than 20 years experience. The comparison group had 2.1% ( $n = 2$ ) missing data pertaining to years of experience and the treatment group had 5.2% ( $n = 5$ ) missing teaching experience data.

The following demographic data describes the grade level taught within each group. The comparison group indicated that 52.7% ( $n = 42$ ) taught K–5<sup>th</sup> grade while the treatment group

indicated that 41.9% ( $n = 34$ ) taught K-5<sup>th</sup> grade. The comparison group identified 17.6% ( $n = 14$ ) participants taught 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade, and the treatment group 22.2% ( $n = 18$ ). The two groups indicated respectively that the following number of participants taught 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade, 8.8% ( $n = 7$ ) and 11.1% ( $n = 9$ ). The demographic data in the area of grade level taught was missing the largest amount of data from both groups. The comparison group was missing 21.3% ( $n = 17$ ) and the treatment group was missing 24.7% ( $n = 20$ ).

The analysis of findings from the descriptive statistics exposed demographic differences and similarities between the two groups in this study. Overall, the demographic descriptions for each group were more alike than different and the researcher felt these differences did not have a significant influence on the findings. Additionally, the researcher felt that by having teachers within each of the five participating schools equally divided among the two groups within the study, the comparison and the treatment groups, increased the merit of the treatment effects. Tables 18 through 23 included results from the demographic items on the instrument and provide percentage and frequency of participation for the two groups.

### **Summary of Overall Findings**

In phase one of the study, the researcher analyzed pre-existing needs assessment data regarding bullying perception, prevalence, prevention, and beliefs. This data had been collected as part of the individual schools' school improvement plan. The needs assessment data was provided to the researcher from the participating system. The researcher used the results of this pre-existing data to design professional development. Each data set was unique to the school receiving professional development. Research question one was answered by analyzing the pre-existing needs assessment data.

There was a statistically significant difference ( $p = .05$ ) at School Four for perceptions of bullying at this school. The dependent variable, *bullying perception*, was different between the student and teacher groupings in only School Four. Student perception of bullying at School Four was lower than what was reported by teachers. There was also a statistical significance for the dependent variable, *bullying prevalence*, at three of the five schools. Means for the student and teacher groups in regards to the dependent variable, *bullying prevalence*, at School One ( $p = < .01$ ), School Two ( $p = .04$ ) and School Four ( $p = .05$ ) were statistically different. Bullying prevalence appeared to be a larger concern for teachers than for students. In Schools Three and School Five it was not different. The results for the dependent variable, *bullying beliefs*, for the student and teacher groups at all five schools were significantly different ( $p = < .001$ ). At all five schools the teachers reported higher mean values for beliefs than did the students. The teacher beliefs regarding bullying were more in line with positively held beliefs on the issue. The results for the dependent variable *prevention*, for the student and teacher groups were statistically significant at School Three ( $p = .02$ ) and School Four ( $p = .05$ ). At three of the five schools there was no difference between the students and the teachers in regard to this dependent variable. This means that students and teachers responded similarly to items relating to prevention efforts currently in place.

While there was not statistical significance for all domains at all five participating schools, the relationships and gaps between the student and teacher data were able to provide value to the rich dialogue that began at each of the initial professional development sessions. The following two research questions were answered using the data collected from the researcher designed BSEI. The independent variable was school specific data informed professional development and included the following domains:

- Bullying Knowledge
- Bullying Beliefs

The dependent variable was the measured difference in bullying knowledge and positively held beliefs regarding bullying between the comparison group and the treatment group. It was hypothesized there would be a positive relationship between the participants in the treatment group and their level of bullying knowledge and beliefs as a result of the school specific data informed professional development.

Based on the data collected from the BSEI in the domain of *bullying knowledge*, there was a statistical significance ( $p < .001$ ) between the bullying knowledge of the comparison group and the bullying knowledge of the treatment group. The effect of the treatment, the school specific professional development, proved to be very successful based on the data reflected in the treatment group's level of bullying knowledge measured on the BSEI. It is again worth mentioning that the researcher chose to randomly select teachers from each school to be in the comparison and the treatment group as opposed to using an entire school as one group or the other. The researcher believed that by creating comparison and treatment groups within each school, it would reduce the risk of having other school specific factors influence the effects of the treatment.

Based on the data collected from the BSEI in the domain of *bullying beliefs*, there was a statistical significance ( $p < .001$ ) between the bullying beliefs of the teachers in the comparison group and the teachers in the treatment group. The treatment, or the school specific professional development, again proved to be very successful in changing the positively held beliefs of the teachers randomly assigned to the treatment group. As a result of the school specific professional development, the previously held beliefs were changed based on the increased

knowledge and awareness provided specific to the school data as well as the findings in the research reviewed in the literature.

Based on the statistically significant findings from the BSEI, the researcher saw merit in offering a follow-up session at each site to provide additional information on the value of creating and functioning as a professional learning community in order to address school issues such as bullying. The researcher collected additional data for this phase of the study using the IPLCI. Data from the IPLCI was analyzed to answer research questions four and five in Phase 3 of the study.

There was a strong correlation between *bullying knowledge* and *professional learning communities* in School Two and School Five. There was a medium correlation between *bullying knowledge* and *professional learning communities* in School One and School Three. In 80% or four out of five schools, teachers saw a linear dependence of *bullying knowledge* and their school as a *learning community*.

There was a strong correlation between *bullying beliefs* and *professional learning communities* in School 2 and School 4. There was a medium correlation between *bullying beliefs* and *professional learning communities* in School 1. In 60%, or three of the five schools, teachers saw a linear dependence between *bullying beliefs* and their school as a *learning community*.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The researcher identified three main implications as a result of completing this study. First, the results of this study indicate that there seems to be evidence that providing professional development based on a schools' data is vitally important to school improvement efforts. Professional development based on the current realities within a specific school will gain teacher

ownership and support much more consistently than a professional development session designed based on general material and national statistics. Professional development is more effective when schools approach it not in isolation, as in one-shot workshops, but rather as a coherent part of a school reform effort (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). The sustainability of the efforts will also be more successful if professional development is designed using individual school data. Using school specific data also allows for more productive conversations between and within school stakeholders. Prevention planning may begin almost immediately if teachers are able to identify what issues are currently at hand school wide or more specifically at their grade level or within their very own classrooms.

The second implication from this study is that sometimes data that is not significant is still important, especially when looking at student lives and school success. The researcher felt it crucial to mention that while the needs assessment data within the individual schools may not have shown statistical significance within the domains of the instrument; the specific items within the domains cannot be ignored. For example in the needs assessment item, *Students feel safe at this school*, there was at least a 37% difference between the students and the teachers at every school participating in the study. The teachers' perception was that students felt much safer than the students actually reported feeling. It seems this would be important to know when instructional planning is being considered. The safety and wellbeing of students must be addressed prior to implementation of the core academic curriculum. In only one of the five schools the difference between students and teachers was statistically significant but differences as great as these cannot go unaddressed. It was apparent early on that the value of the needs assessment data was not so much to complete the requirements of this study and identify statistical significance, but to use the student and teacher data as a springboard for authentic

dialogue and development of professional learning. Additionally, the professional development provided in phase two of this study was not intended to be a single injection of knowledge and awareness in regards to school bullying, but again a starting point for continuous ongoing learning by way of learning communities, among teachers, in an effort to create a school culture that exudes intolerance to bullying. By keeping the data from each of the phases of the study in the forefront, teachers can revisit it often and use the results to make incremental changes to the daily operations of their classrooms and school communities.

The third implication from this study is crucial for school leaders to understand. The correlation data provided in answering research questions four and five supports the need to approach bullying prevention efforts through the development of professional learning communities within each school. Schools that are led by PLC leaders are more open to looking at their data and using it to improve issues such as bullying. The point of a professional learning community is not to just improve teachers' well-being, or to make them more professional in their orientation, but to make a difference for students (Louis, 2007). As previously mentioned, addressing school bullying prevention cannot be done in one session. It is imperative that teachers, students and parents create a community of learners that are willing and eager to continuously massage the efforts within each specific school. One caution I would mention in regards to professional learning communities is that it cannot be approached as something to be implemented but rather as a cultural change that will take place naturally as ongoing efforts are put into place. In functioning as a professional learning community the focus becomes one of continuous improvement and not one of restructuring. Once a professional learning community is focused on bullying, has shared knowledge and vocabulary and incentives based on school data, knowledge that is generated will further define the problem and suggest alternative

approaches to minimize school bullying (Louis, 2007). One shot workshop based professional development is passé. It is common knowledge that teachers seldom apply what they learn during a single workshop in their classrooms. However, when processes are implemented and professional development is provided that is embedded at the building level in a professional learning community, strategies can be applied and results frequently evaluated (Lumpe, 2007). Teachers who work together and engage in continual dialogue to examine their practice and analyze student performance specific to bullying awareness and prevention, are able to develop and implement more effective instructional practices across all curriculum areas. When ongoing opportunities for collegial work are provided by school leaders, teachers learn about, try out, and reflect on new practices or approaches in their specific context, sharing their individual knowledge and expertise. Professional learning communities can change practice and transform student learning when they have in place the processes and structures that make true collaborative work possible and desirable (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

The activities of productive professional learning communities often center on student work and student data; which leads me again to the importance of inclusion of the student in the learning communities. If reform efforts are to take place in regards to bullying prevention in our schools, students must be included in the designing and implementation of these goals and strategies if they are to be effective and embraced. Empowering students to assist in setting school wide goals specific to bullying establishes a sense of ownership with the school community. Engaging teachers *and students* in action research to collect and analyze data, research strategies, and continually evaluate results within their classrooms or peer groups, enlists teachers *and students* as researchers, ultimately sharing in the leadership role (Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scrivner 2000). If we continue to approach our bullying prevention efforts in

a manner that does things to, at and for our students, we are taking a risk in which the ultimate result may unfortunately be student lives. Knowing that the student population in any school outnumbers that of teachers almost ten to one, it makes perfect sense to enlist students in our efforts to prevent bullying and provide every student with a safe, nurturing learning environment.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The resulting recommendations for further study are based on the findings and discussion of this study.

1. The researcher recommends further examination as to the extent that the grade level structure of each of the participating schools might have influenced the student and teacher needs assessment data as well as the data from the comparison and treatment group participants on the BSEI and the IPLCI.

2. The researcher recommends further examination as to the methodological design of the current study and recommends that future research considers a repeated measure ANOVA design using matched pairs.

3. The researcher recommends examining multiple geographic regions including a variety of socio-economic levels so that the results of this study may possibly be generalized across greater areas.

### **Conclusion**

This primarily quantitative study using a comparison/treatment group design, evaluated the effectiveness of designing professional development, using school contextual data, and measured whether the treatment would bring deeper understanding to the important issue of student bullying. The results from the BSEI provided evidence of a statistically significant difference in bullying knowledge and bullying beliefs between the teacher comparison group and

the teacher treatment group. The large effect size provided strength and confidence in the validity of the instrument. Comments from the open ended responses on the teacher treatment group instruments revealed that professional development designed using data specific to the context of an individual school was extremely beneficial to the professional growth of the participants. Additionally, the increased awareness and knowledge of the effects of bullying on the student population as well as the learning environment helped participants see the value in engaging in learning communities to address the issue of bullying in their respective schools.

By forming professional learning communities to address school related problems such as bullying, principals can find immense satisfaction in having all staff members assume collective responsibility for the academic and emotional success of all students. Everyone becomes more aware of the significant influence they have on the learning and behavioral outcomes of students and the roles they play in helping all students achieve expectations (Hord, Roussin, & Sommers, 2010). One key ingredient in establishing professional learning communities to address bullying is including students and their voices. It is important to mention that unless students trust that their voices matter, they'll simply dismiss their involvement as tokenism and a waste of their time.

Including student voice in school makes almost everything else easier to accomplish. Schools can change the view of students as non-contributors by practicing one simple principle: Define the school as the students' community (Beaudoin, 2005). Teachers and school leaders who insist on controlling their students miss out on the opportunity to inspire them. By simply creating structured time to talk with students about bullying in school, the dialogue alone will create subtle changes.

Bullying transcends income level, social class, and race. Teachers, oftentimes take a defensive stance when informed that bullying has happened in their classrooms as they feel it is a reflection on their management abilities. What they don't understand is that a majority of bullying incidences are so subtle; they won't know it is happening. The importance of designing professional development based on the data specific to an individual school must not be minimized. The value in increasing a teacher's knowledge about bullying as well as challenging their currently held beliefs about bullying will have long term effects on our young people. In the world of our youth, belonging and fitting in are two very important needs. Teachers who are simply going through the motions or are not equipped to recognize when a student is not connected with a larger peer group are leaving a lasting mark on their students' psyche. While this may be unintentional on the teacher's part, it emphasizes the importance of addressing the problem of bullying in schools using the context of the school as a starting point.

Students cannot and do not learn in an environment of fear. Bullying prevention efforts are not about buying a specific program. They are about changing the manner in which we professionally develop our teachers, using school specific data to drive the design of the program. Professional development in the area of bullying must not be a single isolated event but rather an ongoing practice of professionals coming together as a learning community to massage and nurture the current needs of the school population, specific to bullying. When all school stakeholders' work together to improve the issue of bullying in their schools the students benefit, and in return, academic achievement prospers.

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## Appendix A

### Student and Teacher Needs Assessment Instruments

## Student Needs Assessment

I am a:	Female	Male								
The grade I am in is:	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
The school I attend is:										
My ethnicity is:	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Other					

For each question below, circle the number to the right that best fits your response.  
Use the scale above the numbers to match your response.

Question	Response				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do Not Know
1. Bullying is a problem at my school.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Bullying is a problem at my grade level.	1	2	3	4	5
3. During an average week, students are bullied in my grade level 0-2 times.	1	2	3	4	5
4. During an average week, students are bullied in my grade level 3-5 times.	1	2	3	4	5
5. During an average week, students are bullied in my grade level more than 5 times.	1	2	3	4	5
6. At this school verbal bullying (teasing, name calling, threats, racial slurs, criticism) happens.	1	2	3	4	5
7. At this school physical bullying (hitting, tripping, pushing) happens.	1	2	3	4	5
8. At this school relational bullying (isolating, being left out on purpose, and rumors spread) happens.	1	2	3	4	5
9. At this school cyber-bullying (using cell phones, internet, or other technology to harass, intimidate, embarrass, or humiliate) happens.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The bullies in this school are most often boys.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The bullies in this school are most often girls.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Students that witness bullying at this school try to stop the bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When teachers see bullying, they try to stop the bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When I see bullying at this school, I tell an adult.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When I am bullied at this school, I tell an adult.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Rank the location in order of frequency that students are bullied at this school from 1-10. #1 being the location that most bullying occurs, #10 being the location the least bullying occurs within these choices.					
___ Playground/Recess	___ Lunchroom	___ Bathrooms	___ Internet or Cell Phones		
___ Hallways	___ To and From School	___ On the bus			
___ Classrooms	___ PE Class	___ After School Program			

Question	Response				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do Not Know
17. I have been called names by others at this school.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I have been excluded or left out on purpose at this school.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I have been hit, pushed, tripped or kicked on purpose at this school.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I have had someone spread unkind rumors about me at this school.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I have been made fun of by others at this school because of the way I look or dress.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I have been embarrassed, made angry or uncomfortable by something said about me on a cell phone or on-line.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I believe that students should learn to take care of their own problems, even bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I believe what people are calling bullying in this school is really just students teasing and having fun.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I believe that bullying is a part of growing up and students will grow out of it. "Boys will be boys, girls will be girls".	1	2	3	4	5
26. I believe that a majority of bullying incidences occur outside of the classroom so teachers are not informed or aware of the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I believe that victims of bullying bring it on themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I believe that increased staff awareness would decrease bullying behaviors from occurring in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I believe that I have played a part in stopping bullying behaviors at this school.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I believe that students feel safe in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I believe that students bully their peers because they are jealous.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I believe that students bully their peers because they want attention.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I believe that students bully their peers because they want to feel powerful.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I believe that students bully their peers because they have low self esteem.	1	2	3	4	5
35. What changes need to be made in our school concerning bullying?					

## TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

My gender is:	Female	Male											
The grade I teach is:	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
I have been teaching the following # of years:	0-2	3-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+							
My ethnicity is:	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Other								
The highest degree I hold is:	Bachelors	Masters	Specialist	Doctorate	Other								

For each question below, circle the number to the right that best fits your response.  
Use the scale above the numbers to match your response.

Question	Response				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do Not Know
1. Bullying is a problem at my school.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Bullying is a problem at my grade level.	1	2	3	4	5
3. During an average week, students are bullied in my grade level 0-2 times.	1	2	3	4	5
4. During an average week, students are bullied in my grade level 3-5 times.	1	2	3	4	5
5. During an average week, students are bullied in my grade level more than 5 times.	1	2	3	4	5
6. At this school verbal bullying (teasing, name calling, threats, racial slurs, and criticism) happens.	1	2	3	4	5
7. At this school physical bullying (hitting, tripping, pushing) happens.	1	2	3	4	5
8. At this school relational bullying (isolating, being left out on purpose, and rumors spread) happens.	1	2	3	4	5
9. At this school cyber-bullying (using cell phones, internet, or other technology to harass, intimidate, embarrass, or humiliate) happens.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The bullies in this school are most often boys.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The bullies in this school are most often girls.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Students that witness bullying at this school try to stop the bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When teachers see bullying, they intervene.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When a student sees bullying at this school, they tell an adult.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When a student is bullied at this school, they tell an adult.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Rank the location in order of frequency that students are bullied at this school from 1-10. #1 being the location that most bullying occurs, #10 being the location the least bullying occurs within these choices.					
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <span>___ Playground/Recess</span> <span>___ Lunchroom</span> <span>___ Bathrooms</span> <span>___ Internet or Cell Phones</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <span>___ Hallways</span> <span>___ To and From School</span> <span>___ On the bus</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <span>___ Classrooms</span> <span>___ PE Class</span> <span>___ After School Program</span> </div>					

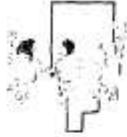
Question	Response				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do Not Know
17. Students at this school have been called names by others.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Students at this school have been excluded or left out on purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Students at this school have been hit, pushed, tripped or kicked on purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Students at this school have had unkind rumors spread about them.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Students have been made fun of by others at this school because of the way they look or dress.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Students at this school have been embarrassed, made angry or uncomfortable by something said about them on a cell phone or on-line.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I believe that students should learn to take care of their own problems, even bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I believe what people are calling bullying in this school is really just students teasing and having fun.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I believe that bullying is a part of growing up and students will grow out of it. "Boys will be boys, girls will be girls".	1	2	3	4	5
26. I believe that a majority of bullying incidences occur outside of the classroom so teachers are not informed or aware of the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I believe that victims of bullying bring it on themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I believe that increased staff awareness would decrease bullying behaviors from occurring in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I believe that I have played a part in stopping bullying behaviors at this school.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I believe that students feel safe in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I believe that students bully their peers because they are jealous.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I believe that students bully their peers because they want attention.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I believe that students bully their peers because they want to feel powerful.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I believe that students bully their peers because they have low self esteem.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I believe that faculty should take responsibility for the bullying issues in our school.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I believe that all stakeholders in this school, including students, should be involved in prevention/intervention efforts, in order to reduce bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I believe that we should proactively increase knowledge about the harmful effects of bullying for all stakeholders, including students.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I believe it is important for us to understand why children bully if we wish for it to stop.	1	2	3	4	5

Question	Response				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do Not Know
39. I believe that stakeholder awareness of bullying will make our school safer.	1	2	3	4	5
40. To prevent being bullied, students should confide in a friend.	1	2	3	4	5
41. To prevent being bullied, students should stand up to the bully.	1	2	3	4	5
42. To prevent bullying in this school, teachers should talk to the bully.	1	2	3	4	5
43. To prevent bullying in this school, teachers should get the bully and the victim to talk to each other.	1	2	3	4	5
44. To prevent bullying in this school, school personnel should punish the bullies.	1	2	3	4	5
45. To prevent bullying, school personnel need to know what data, specific to their school, is reported by students, regarding bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
46. I know what research says on how to prevent/intervene in bullying incidents.	1	2	3	4	5
47. The administration and teachers at this school are engaged in continuous learning opportunities in the area of bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
48. In the past year, bullying has been discussed at a minimum of 3 meetings such as faculty, PTA, grade level, or leadership team meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
49. In the past year, our faculty has engaged in at least one book study related to bullying prevention/intervention.	1	2	3	4	5
50. At this school the administration and teachers are willing to share in decision making regarding bullying prevention/intervention.	1	2	3	4	5
51. At this school the administration and teachers are willing to share in taking responsibility regarding bullying prevention/intervention.	1	2	3	4	5
52. At this school the administration and the teachers welcome student voice in regards to bullying issues.	1	2	3	4	5
53. If school data informs the staff that bullying is a concern at this school, we should receive professional development in this area.	1	2	3	4	5
54. Teachers and administrators at this school are guided by research based practices on bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
55. If administrators and teachers agreed professional development for bullying was important; time, space and other resources would be made available.	1	2	3	4	5
56. If administrators and teachers found bullying to be a concern we would be able to collaborate to address this issue.	1	2	3	4	5

Question	Response				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do Not Know
57. Relational factors exist at this school that support meaningful conversations regarding bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
58. Staff members at this school are willing to give and receive feedback regarding bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
59. Bullying prevention strategies are successful because the administration and faculty support one another towards improvement of the learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
60. Staff members at this school understand that the fundamental purpose of this school is student learning and bullying should not be allowed to interfere.	1	2	3	4	5
61. Staff members at this school would embrace change in structures and processes that would decrease bullying incidents to improve the learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
62. Teachers and administrators at this school support one another in regards to bullying prevention/intervention strategies in order to improve the learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
63. There is trust amongst teachers and administrators which allows for productive conversations concerning bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
64. What changes need to be made in our school concerning prevention/intervention of bullying?					

## Appendix B

### Permission Letter from Participating System



# Tallapoosa County Board of Education

Philip S. Baker  
Superintendent

*"Every child, every chance, every day!"*

October 13, 2010

Institutional Review Board  
c/o Office of Human Subjects Research  
307 Samford Hall  
Auburn University, AL 36849

Dear IRB Members,

After reviewing the proposed study, "Exploring school specific context and bullying data: Informing practice with evidence", presented by Auburn University graduate student, Ms. Shannon J. Pignato, I have granted permission for the use of anonymous, preexisting student and staff data, collected for the purposes of school improvement and professional development, concerning bullying. Additionally, I have granted the use of the data from the researcher designed summative evaluation for the purposes of measuring the effectiveness of the data informed professional development she will be providing to participating schools, specific to bullying.

The purpose of this study is to use the information gathered from the preexisting data completed by these stakeholders, regarding their perception of bullying within their building to create a meaningful learning opportunity for the staff within the participating schools. This project will allow the participating schools to increase their knowledge and awareness of bullying and put a protocol into place.

The summative evaluation data will be collected using paper and pencil. There is no risk of coercion because it is an anonymous survey. The researcher has no way to identify the participants and their participation in this summative evaluation.

If the IRB has any concerns about the permission being granted by this letter, please contact me at 256-827-2013.

Sincerely,

Linda B. Davis  
Director of Curriculum & Instruction  
Tallapoosa County Schools  
125 N. Broadnax Street  
Dadeville, AL 36853

125 North Broadnax Street, Dadeville, AL 36853 (256) 825-1020 Fax 825-1003  
Randy Anderson, chairman \* Martin Johnson \* Matilda Hamilton \* Cindy Ralley \* Karen White  
Web Site <http://www.tallapoosa.k12.org>

## Appendix C

### Participating School Percentage Gaps

## School One

QUESTION	STUDENT	STAFF
1. Bullying is a problem at my school.	71%	64%
2. Bullying is a problem at my grade level.	57%	56%
3. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 0-2 times.	47%	84%
4. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 3-5 times.	54%	30%
5. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 5 or more times.	43%	17%
6. At this school verbal bullying happens.	82%	93%
7. At this school physical bullying happens.	82%	80%
8. At this school relational bullying happens.	70%	88%
9. At this school cyber-bullying happens.	46%	84%
10. The bullies in this school are most often boys.	64%	35%
11. The bullies in this school are most often girls.	47%	73%
12. Students that witness bullying at this school, try to stop the bullying.	69%	36%
13. When teachers see bullying, they try to stop the bullying.	87%	95%
14. When I see bullying at this school (When a student sees bullying at this school) I (they) tell an adult.	88%	44%
15. When I (a student) is bullied at this school I (they) tell an adult.	83%	44%
17. I (Students) have been called names by others at this school.		
18. I (Students) have been excluded or left out on purpose at this school.	47%	93%
19. I (Students) have been hit, pushed, tripped or kicked on purpose at this school.	62%	93%
20. I (students) have had unkind rumors spread about them at this school.	54%	93%

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>STUDENT</b>	<b>STAFF</b>
21. I (students) have been made fun of because of the way I (they) look or dress.	58%	96%
22. I (students) have been embarrassed, made angry, or uncomfortable by something said about me (them) on a cell-phone or on-line.	44%	71%
23. I believe that students should learn to take care of their own problems, even bullying.	63%	25%
24. I believe what people are calling bullying in this school is really just teasing and having fun.	43%	7%
25. I believe that bullying is a part of growing up and students will grow out of it.	52%	7%
26. I believe a majority of bullying occurs outside of the classroom so teachers are not informed or aware of the problem.	80%	89%
27. I believe victims of bullying bring it on themselves.	58%	0%
28. I believe that increased staff awareness would decrease bullying behaviors in this school.	69%	56%
29. I believe that I have played a part in stopping bullying behaviors at this school.	57%	92%
30. I believe that students feel safe at this school.	59%	96%
31. I believe students bully because they are jealous.	73%	87%
32. I believe students bully because they want attention.	76%	92%
33. I believe students bully because they want to feel powerful.	81%	96%
34. I believe students bully because they have low self-esteem.	67%	89%

## School Two

QUESTION	STUDENT	STAFF
1. Bullying is a problem at my school.	78%	60%
2. Bullying is a problem at my grade level.	59%	63%
3. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 0-2 times.	50%	75%
4. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 3-5 times.	31%	21%
5. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 5 or more times.	31%	21%
6. At this school verbal bullying happens.	83%	85%
7. At this school physical bullying happens.	77%	84%
8. At this school relational bullying happens.	79%	94%
9. At this school cyber-bullying happens.	58%	78%
10. The bullies in this school are most often boys.	68%	24%
11. The bullies in this school are most often girls.	43%	25%
12. Students that witness bullying at this school, try to stop the bullying.	70%	55%
13. When teachers see bullying, they try to stop the bullying.	95%	90%
14. When I see bullying at this school (When a student sees bullying at this school) I (they) tell an adult.	84%	61%
15. When I (a student) am/is bullied at this school I (they) tell an adult.	87%	53%
17. I (Students) have been called names by others at this school.	76%	95%
18. I (Students) have been excluded or left out on purpose at this school.	51%	94%
19. I (Students) have been hit, pushed, tripped or kicked on purpose at this school.	57%	95%
20. I (students) have had unkind rumors spread about them at this school.	50%	90%

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>STUDENT</b>	<b>STAFF</b>
21. I (students) have been made fun of because of the way I (they) look or dress.	51%	94%
22. I (students) have been embarrassed, made angry, or uncomfortable by something said about me (them) on a cell-phone or on-line.	37%	92%
23. I believe that students should learn to take care of their own problems, even bullying.	59%	16%
24. I believe what people are calling bullying in this school is really just teasing and having fun.	47%	6%
25. I believe that bullying is a part of growing up and students will grow out of it.	50%	5%
26. I believe a majority of bullying occurs outside of the classroom so teachers are not informed or aware of the problem.	83%	89%
27. I believe victims of bullying bring it on themselves.	52%	11%
28. I believe that increased staff awareness would decrease bullying behaviors in this school.	74%	84%
29. I believe that I have played a part in stopping bullying behaviors at this school.	61%	90%
30. I believe that students feel safe at this school.	54%	100%
31. I believe students bully because they are jealous.	79%	94%
32. I believe students bully because they want attention.	75%	95%
33. I believe students bully because they want to feel powerful.	83%	95%
34. I believe students bully because they have low self-esteem.	59%	90%

## School Three

QUESTION	STUDENT	STAFF
1. Bullying is a problem at my school.	70%	62%
2. Bullying is a problem at my grade level.	72%	59%
3. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 0-2 times.	46%	47%
4. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 3-5 times.	52%	37%
5. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 5 or more times.	50%	16%
6. At this school verbal bullying happens.	75%	75%
7. At this school physical bullying happens.	69%	75%
8. At this school relational bullying happens.	47%	68%
9. At this school cyber-bullying happens.	24%	6%
10. The bullies in this school are most often boys.	62%	30%
11. The bullies in this school are most often girls.	37%	45%
12. Students that witness bullying at this school, try to stop the bullying.	61%	65%
13. When teachers see bullying, they try to stop the bullying.	84%	96%
14. When I see bullying at this school (When a student sees bullying at this school) I (they) tell an adult.	80%	92%
15. When I (a student) am/is bullied at this school I (they) tell an adult.	79%	87%
17. I (Students) have been called names by others at this school.	75%	92%
18. I (Students) have been excluded or left out on purpose at this school.	55%	88%
19. I (Students) have been hit, pushed, tripped or kicked on purpose at this school.	67%	92%
20. I (students) have had unkind rumors spread about them at this school.	55%	65%

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>STUDENT</b>	<b>STAFF</b>
21. I (students) have been made fun of because of the way I (they) look or dress.	52%	83%
22. I (students) have been embarrassed, made angry, or uncomfortable by something said about me (them) on a cell-phone or on-line.	28%	17%
23. I believe that students should learn to take care of their own problems, even bullying.	51%	12%
24. I believe what people are calling bullying in this school is really just teasing and having fun.	40%	24%
25. I believe that bullying is a part of growing up and students will grow out of it.	53%	8%
26. I believe a majority of bullying occurs outside of the classroom so teachers are not informed or aware of the problem.	74%	87%
27. I believe victims of bullying bring it on themselves.	48%	4%
28. I believe that increased staff awareness would decrease bullying behaviors in this school.	69%	80%
29. I believe that I have played a part in stopping bullying behaviors at this school.	67%	96%
30. I believe that students feel safe at this school.	47%	83%
31. I believe students bully because they are jealous.	67%	78%
32. I believe students bully because they want attention.	66%	91%
33. I believe students bully because they want to feel powerful.	69%	92%
34. I believe students bully because they have low self-esteem.	57%	83%

## School Four

QUESTION	STUDENT	STAFF
1. Bullying is a problem at my school.	71%	58%
2. Bullying is a problem at my grade level.	69%	70%
3. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 0-2 times.	51%	68%
4. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 3-5 times.	46%	50%
5. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 5 or more times.	50%	29%
6. At this school verbal bullying happens.	87%	88%
7. At this school physical bullying happens.	86%	77%
8. At this school relational bullying happens.	80%	78%
9. At this school cyber-bullying happens.	37%	57%
10. The bullies in this school are most often boys.	68%	28%
11. The bullies in this school are most often girls.	50%	83%
12. Students that witness bullying at this school, try to stop the bullying.	59%	58%
13. When teachers see bullying, they try to stop the bullying.	87%	86%
14. When I see bullying at this school (When a student sees bullying at this school) I (they) tell an adult.	73%	61%
15. When I (a student) am/is bullied at this school I (they) tell an adult.	72%	41%
17. I (Students) have been called names by others at this school.	83%	92%
18. I (Students) have been excluded or left out on purpose at this school.	54%	82%
19. I (Students) have been hit, pushed, tripped or kicked on purpose at this school.	58%	95%
20. I (students) have had unkind rumors spread about them at this school.	54%	95%

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>STUDENT</b>	<b>STAFF</b>
21. I (students) have been made fun of because of the way I (they) look or dress.	49%	96%
22. I (students) have been embarrassed, made angry, or uncomfortable by something said about me (them) on a cell-phone or on-line.	33%	93%
23. I believe that students should learn to take care of their own problems, even bullying.	66%	10%
24. I believe what people are calling bullying in this school is really just teasing and having fun.	49%	0%
25. I believe that bullying is a part of growing up and students will grow out of it.	50%	10%
26. I believe a majority of bullying occurs outside of the classroom so teachers are not informed or aware of the problem.	87%	96%
27. I believe victims of bullying bring it on themselves.	54%	0%
28. I believe that increased staff awareness would decrease bullying behaviors in this school.	71%	86%
29. I believe that I have played a part in stopping bullying behaviors at this school.	60%	96%
30. I believe that students feel safe at this school.	50%	95%
31. I believe students bully because they are jealous.	77%	91%
32. I believe students bully because they want attention.	87%	96%
33. I believe students bully because they want to feel powerful.	79%	96%
34. I believe students bully because they have low self-esteem.	68%	96%

## School Five

QUESTION	STUDENT	STAFF
1. Bullying is a problem at my school.	61%	50%
2. Bullying is a problem at my grade level.	56%	46%
3. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 0-2 times.	36%	60%
4. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 3-5 times.	55%	30%
5. During an average week, students are bullied on my grade level 5 or more times.	59%	30%
6. At this school verbal bullying happens.	83%	92%
7. At this school physical bullying happens.	85%	73%
8. At this school relational bullying happens.	61%	82%
9. At this school cyber-bullying happens.	52%	44%
10. The bullies in this school are most often boys.	78%	58%
11. The bullies in this school are most often girls.	36%	29%
12. Students that witness bullying at this school, try to stop the bullying.	58%	25%
13. When teachers see bullying, they try to stop the bullying.	89%	92%
14. When I see bullying at this school (When a student sees bullying at this school) I (they) tell an adult.	72%	36%
15. When I (a student) am/is bullied at this school I (they) tell an adult.	62%	36%
17. I (Students) have been called names by others at this school.	86%	92%
18. I (Students) have been excluded or left out on purpose at this school.	45%	83%
19. I (Students) have been hit, pushed, tripped or kicked on purpose at this school.	60%	92%
20. I (students) have had unkind rumors spread about them at this school.	69%	92%

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>STUDENT</b>	<b>STAFF</b>
21. I (students) have been made fun of because of the way I (they) look or dress.	46%	91%
22. I (students) have been embarrassed, made angry, or uncomfortable by something said about me (them) on a cell-phone or on-line.	28%	89%
23. I believe that students should learn to take care of their own problems, even bullying.	71%	8%
24. I believe what people are calling bullying in this school is really just teasing and having fun.	53%	17%
25. I believe that bullying is a part of growing up and students will grow out of it.	66%	8%
26. I believe a majority of bullying occurs outside of the classroom so teachers are not informed or aware of the problem.	81%	83%
27. I believe victims of bullying bring it on themselves.	67%	8%
28. I believe that increased staff awareness would decrease bullying behaviors in this school.	74%	92%
29. I believe that I have played a part in stopping bullying behaviors at this school.	62%	100%
30. I believe that students feel safe at this school.	48%	91%
31. I believe students bully because they are jealous.	81%	91%
32. I believe students bully because they want attention.	67%	91%
33. I believe students bully because they want to feel powerful.	68%	92%
34. I believe students bully because they have low self-esteem.	61%	91%

Appendix D

Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument (BSEI)

## Bullying Summary Evaluation Instrument (BSEI)

My gender is:	Female	Male				
The grade I teach is:	1	2	3	4	5	
I have been teaching the following # of years:	0-2	3-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
My ethnicity is:	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Other	
The highest degree I hold is:	Bachelors	Masters	Specialist	Doctorate	Other	
My school name is:						
For each question below, circle the number to the right that best fits your response.						
Question	Response					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do Not Know	
1. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of the gaps between student and teacher perceptions of bullying frequency in our school.	1	2	3	4	5	
2. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of the types of bullying that occur at this school, as reported by student and staff perceptions.	1	2	3	4	5	
3. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of gaps in perception regarding the gender of bullies, reported by students and staff.	1	2	3	4	5	
4. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge in regards to the gaps between teachers and students willingness to intervene.	1	2	3	4	5	
5. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of the location of bullying in our school, as reported by student and staff perceptions.	1	2	3	4	5	
6. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of the gaps in teacher and student perception regarding the types of victimization occurring in this school.	1	2	3	4	5	
7. The gaps shared in this in-service between teacher and student beliefs have challenged my current paradigm regarding bullying. Respond to the following belief statements based on how you now feel.						
I believe students should learn to take care of their own problems, even bullying.	1	2	3	4	5	
I believe that what people are calling bullying in this school is really just students teasing and having fun.	1	2	3	4	5	
I believe that bullying is a part of growing up and students will grow out of it. "Boys will be boys, girls will be girls".	1	2	3	4	5	
I believe that a majority of incidences occur outside of the classroom so teachers are not informed or aware of the problem.	1	2	3	4	5	
I believe that victims of bullying bring it on themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	

Question	Response				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do Not Know
I believe that increased staff awareness would decrease bullying behaviors at this school.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe that I have played a part in stopping bullying behaviors at this school.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of why students bully, based on student and staff perceptual gaps as well as research findings.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Based on our school's bullying data, I believe that faculty should take responsibility of bullying issues in our school.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I believe that all stakeholders in this school, including students, should be involved in prevention/intervention efforts, in order to reduce bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I believe that we should proactively increase knowledge about the harmful effects of bullying for all stakeholders, including students.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I believe it is important for us to understand why children bully if we wish for it to stop.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I believe that stakeholder awareness of bullying will make our school safer.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of effective intervention strategies for students to use to effectively address bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of effective intervention strategies for teachers to use to effectively address bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The bullying in-service increased my knowledge of effective intervention strategies for school personnel to use to effectively address bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
17. To prevent bullying, school personnel need to know what data, specific to their school, is reported by students, regarding bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Based on the bullying in-service, I know what research says on how to prevent/intervene in bullying incidents.	1	2	3	4	5
19. The bullying in-service using our school data increased my knowledge of this issue.	1	2	3	4	5
20. The bullying in-service using our school data increased my awareness of how bullying interferes with learning.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The bullying in-service validated the importance of using school specific data to increase knowledge and awareness of this issue, based on the gaps between student and staff data.	1	2	3	4	5

22. Please respond to 3 of the 5 stems below in the space provided.

- The most surprising gaps between student and staff perception were in the area of...
- After viewing my school specific data, one change I will make to my current practices specific to bullying is...
- One unanswered question and/or concern I still have specific to bullying in this school is...
- I think we should pay more attention to context specific bullying data of our school because...
- I would like to serve in the capacity of \_\_\_\_\_ concerning bullying at this school.

23. Based on the bullying in-service, what changes do you now feel need to be made in your school concerning the intervention/prevention of bullying?

Appendix E  
Information Letter



The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 10/27/10 to 10/24/11 Protocol # 10-311 ET 1010

## AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

### INFORMATION LETTER

for a Research Study entitled

“Exploring school specific context and bullying data: Informing practice with evidence”

You are invited to participate in a research study to determine if professional development, using pre-existing school contextual bullying data, (as gathered for school improvement) will bring deeper understanding to the important issue of student bullying. An additional purpose of the research study is to determine if school leadership will be perceived by faculty as important in driving evidenced based decisions as well as to see if schools that receive the professional development perceive a stronger relationship between elements of a professional learning community and bullying prevention.

If you decide to participate in the research study, you will be asked to complete the researcher developed summative evaluation instrument. Your total time commitment will be approximately twenty minutes to complete the summative evaluation. The professional development is designed as part of your school improvement action plan. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of EFLT or Tallapoosa County Schools.

The researcher expects no risks and discomforts associated with this study because the questions are part of the normal routine and the instrument is an anonymous survey.

Although there are no personal benefits to participation in this evaluation, the benefits to the stakeholders in your school include professional development directly related to the issue of bullying within the context of your school.

There will be no compensation provided to participants.

We will protect your privacy and the data you provide by collecting only anonymous data and storing it in a locked filing system on the campus of Auburn University. The data will be destroyed no later than one year after the IRB approval.

If you have any questions about this study, please ask them now or contact by phone, Dr. Ellen Reames at (334)844-3067 or by email, [reamsch@auburn.edu](mailto:reamsch@auburn.edu) or Shannon Pignato by phone (334)703-2557 or by email, [SEP0007@auburn.edu](mailto:SEP0007@auburn.edu).

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 3684-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

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The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 10/27/10 to 10/26/11 Protocol # 10-311 EX 1010

**AUBURN UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)844-5966 or email at [hsubjec@auburn.edu](mailto:hsubjec@auburn.edu) or [IRBChair@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBChair@auburn.edu).

HAVING READ THIS INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

Shannon Pignato 11-3-10  
Investigator's signature Date

Shannon Pignato  
Print Name

Ellen H. Reamer 11-3-10  
Co-Investigator Date

Ellen H. Reamer  
Printed Name

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 3684-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

[www.auburn.edu](http://www.auburn.edu)

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## Appendix F

### Indicators of Professional Learning Communities Instrument (IPLCI)

## Indicators of Professional Learning Communities (IPLCI)

My gender is:	Female	Male											
The grade I teach is:	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
I have been teaching the following # of years:	0-2	3-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+							
My ethnicity is:	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Other								
The highest degree I hold is:	Bachelors	Masters	Specialist	Doctorate	Other								
My school name is:													
For each question below, circle the number to the right that best fits your response.													
Question	Response												
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do Not Know								
1. The administration and teachers at this school are engaged in continuous learning opportunities in the area of bullying prevention/intervention.	1	2	3	4	5								
2. In the past year, bullying has been discussed at a minimum of 3 meetings such as faculty, PTA, grade level, or leadership team meetings.	1	2	3	4	5								
3. In the past year, our faculty has engaged in at least one book study related to bullying prevention/intervention.	1	2	3	4	5								
4. At this school the administration and teachers are willing to share in decision making regarding bullying prevention/intervention.	1	2	3	4	5								
5. At this school the administration and teachers are willing to share in taking responsibility regarding bullying prevention/intervention.	1	2	3	4	5								
6. At this school the administration and the teachers welcome student voice in regards to bullying issues.	1	2	3	4	5								
7. If school data informs the staff that bullying is a concern at this school, we should receive professional development in this area.	1	2	3	4	5								

Question	Response				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Do Not Know
8. Teachers and administrators at this school are guided by research based practices on bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
9. If administrators and teachers agreed professional development for bullying was important; time, space and other resources would be made available.	1	2	3	4	5
10. If administrators and teachers found bullying to be a concern we would be able to collaborate to address this issue.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Relational factors exist at this school that support meaningful conversations regarding bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Staff members at this school are willing to give and receive feedback regarding bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Bullying prevention strategies are successful because the administration and faculty support one another towards improvement of the learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Staff members at this school understand that the fundamental purpose of this school is student learning and bullying should not be allowed to interfere.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Staff members at this school would embrace change in structures and processes that would decrease bullying incidents to improve the learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Teachers and administrators at this school support one another in regards to bullying prevention/intervention strategies in order to improve the learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
17. There is trust amongst teachers and administrators which allows for productive conversations concerning bullying.	1	2	3	4	5