


2015

Bullying Perceptions: Understanding Students With and Without Disabilities

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Bullying Perceptions: Understanding Students With and Without Disabilities

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Submitted to: Dr. Lori Howard

CISP 615

April 27, 2015

Abstract

The study investigates perceptions about bullying for intermediate students with and without disabilities. A survey administered to each student assessed perceptions related to bullying and friendship. Interview questions related to specific instances of bullying encountered were also administered. The results indicate perception variations between students with and without disabilities. Students with disabilities reported victimization at a higher rate than students without disabilities, except for verbal bullying and relational bullying which were reported at an equal rate. Students without disabilities reported a higher rate of bullying instances by friends, while students with disabilities report a desire to have more friends. Since perceptions between students with and without disabilities vary, more research is needed to clarify student understanding and to replicate these results.

Keywords: bullying, perceptions, forms of bullying, students with disabilities, students without disabilities, aggression,

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The prevalence of bullying in the United States has become a concern to school administrators, teachers, school counselors, parents, and students. Intermediate students often feel powerless and incapable of stopping the harassment that plagues school children. Anti-bullying programs have exploded into popularity. However, the question remains, how can bullying be prevented? Victims and targets of bullies feel that bullying is a lifelong sentence that they must learn to endure. These students often become statistics for academic difficulty, social/emotional problems and difficulty forming and maintaining friendships (Balfanz, Herzog, & Mac Iver, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Although the definition of bullying differs in various cultures, the common factor involves repeated, malicious intent to harm another person (Olweus, 1995). Often, children target students with disabilities or those with low self-esteem. Victims often endure verbal and physical abuse every day at school (Olweus, 1995). Verbal and physical abuse includes making faces, dirty gestures, words, physical contact and intentional exclusion (Olweus, 1995). Understanding student perceptions of bullying can allow school districts to employ prevention programs that will be effective. Assessing student attitudes provides insight to the root cause of the problem and can identify target areas for prevention programs.

Intermediate students have a difficult time comprehending the definition of bullying. Young children feel that bullying involves every instance where another child is cruel or unkind, despite bully prevention programs which teach that bullying involves persistent harm inflicted upon another person (Olweus, 1995). Student perceptions impact bully prevention programs due

to student misconception of what constitutes bullying. Understanding perception will contribute to the development of effective prevention programs.

Bullying causes a variety of problems including educational problems, social/emotional problems, truancy problems and friendship problems for students with and without disabilities (Berkowitz & Benbenishty, 2012). The psychological impact of bullying causes harm that can be irreversible for victims. Students who are bullied suffer more than just verbal and physical abuse. These victims struggle in areas that can affect their success throughout the remainder of their life. Truancy causes a loss of instructional time, missed classwork, and academic problems that are difficult to reverse. Social and emotional challenges cause low self-esteem, depression and anxiety, difficulty building or maintaining friendships, and other possible mental health problems (Son et al., 2014). Students who are bullied often struggle academically, feel unsupported by teachers and other adults, and often feel afraid to attend school (Berkowitz & Benbenishty, 2012).

Academic difficulties can predict student involvement in bullying through victimization or perpetration (Rose, Swearer, & Espelage, 2012). Students may struggle academically as a result of fear, low self-esteem, difficulty focusing on school work, behavioral problems, or simply as a result of a disability (Rose et al., 2012). Studies specify that students with disabilities face the challenges of bullying at a substantially higher rate than students without disabilities (Blake, Lund, Zhou, Kwok, & Benz, 2012). This could be a result of issues related to the disability including social skills or communication deficits and the perception of weakness (Blake et al., 2012). Regardless of the reason, students with disabilities and those without disabilities deserve to attend school in a safe and bully free environment. Student perceptions

provide insight for school staff that can promote higher academic achievement as bully prevention programs become more effective.

Social and emotional problems are directly related to bullying. Students who are victimized feel powerless. The consequences of victimization differ among students; however, every consequence is detrimental to student success (Son et al., 2014). Typical bullying victims struggle with lower self-esteem and often assume the role of a passive or submissive victim (Olweus, 1995). These students struggle with their self-concept, are perceived as weak, and are usually over anxious (Olweus, 1995). Weaker students become easy targets for a bully who is seeking to obtain power. The power imbalance between bullies and victims contributes to the continuous cycle that becomes difficult to break (Blake et al., 2012).

The link between social/emotional challenges in students with disabilities and the risk for victimization causes concern for educators, parents, and administrators. Gaining insight into the perception of students will amplify the classified roles of bullies and victims by explaining which children are prone to be victimized and which children are more likely to commit bullying. Studies indicate that disability status increases a student's risk for victimization (Blake et al., 2012). Understanding the comparison between perceptions of students with disabilities and students without disabilities is imperative to providing insight into the study.

Since bullying victims are more prone to isolation and social rejection they are more likely to become truant (Berkowitz & Benbenishty, 2012). Victims feel anxiety related to attending school so they chose to avoid unpleasant situations and stay home (Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor, & Zeira, 2004). Student perception of school climate is imperative to the implementation of a successful school-wide bully prevention program. Bully victims struggle to survive the day to day banter in the classroom. These students have a hard time attending to

academic lessons when they fear for their safety in the school setting. Bully victims report feelings of insecurity, school violence, and a lack of support in the school setting (Berkowitz & Benbenishty, 2012). When students feel insecure at school they stay home. Poor school attendance is directly related to lower achievement, higher dropout rates and criminal offenses resulting in imprisonment later in life (Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2004).

It is difficult to educate students whose basic needs are not being met in the school environment. These students need support from a program that promotes self-efficacy for bullying victims. Understanding student perceptions promotes the ability to implement a program that targets bullies, victims, and bystanders to create a positive and safe school environment. Defining student needs based on current perceptions has the potential to improve school climate and reduce bullying.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate attitudes and perceptions about bullying for intermediate students with disabilities and intermediate students without disabilities. One of the most common complaints for elementary students entails dealing with bullying in schools. Student perception surveys will measure attitudes and help define characteristics for an effective bully prevention program. Some of the students have been identified as students with disabilities (learning disabilities, mild mental impairment, ADHD, ED/BD, and other health impairment).

Rationale for the Study

Physical and mental health problems caused by bullying raise concerns for educators, parents, and students. News media heightened awareness of the problem by reporting instances of homicide and bullycide. Media coverage brought bullying to the forefront of school climate

issues and intensified the need for further research. Students with disabilities struggle with the challenges of bullying at a higher rate than their non-disabled peers. Perceptions of students with disabilities and students without disabilities can provide valuable information to promote wellness for all students in the school setting.

Multiple studies reveal a variety of bullying prevalence rates for students with and without disabilities. Understanding student perceptions for all students can provide data supporting specific interventions to develop an effective prevention program.

Research Question

Perception plays an integral role in the success of anti-bullying programs. Determining student feelings and ideas related to bullying can promote change in programs and exert positive transformation. What are student perceptions about bullying for intermediate students with disabilities and intermediate students without disabilities? Answering this question can provide insight into progressive change to promote a bully free school zone and student success.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Bullying is not a new problem; however, it has exploded into popularity as a result of school related shootings and highly publicized student suicides. Bullying is a problematic behavior that prevents student success. It has been linked to poorer quality of life for both the victims and the bullies. This causes academic challenges, relational challenges, and a lack of peace or sense of well-being (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007).

Schools in America are struggling to implement Common Core Standards and find student success by meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). However, students have trouble meeting academic standards due to behavioral boundaries, bullying, and social situations in the classroom (Rose, Espelage, Aragon, & Elliott, 2011). The frequency of reported bullying is not consistent due to misconceptions of the varied definitions of bullying. Some studies indicate that teachers define bullying as physical aggression only (Bradshaw et al., 2007). Others indicate bullying as a more severe problem including verbal aggression and indirect relational aggression (Waasdorp, Pas, O'Brennan, & Bradshaw, 2011). Problem behaviors interfere with learning and cause social and academic problems (Morgan & Sideridis, 2013); therefore, bullying requires further research to clearly define perceptions and promote effective prevention programs.

Forms of Bullying

Bullying is defined as aggressive behavior that is intentional, repetitive, and involves an imbalance of power between the two parties (Haltigan & Vaillancourt, 2014; Olweus, 1995). The definition of bullying is often misinterpreted by teachers, parents and students. In school-aged children, the term bullying is used for every act of unkindness. Three forms of bullying

include direct physical aggression, direct verbal aggression and indirect relational aggression (Newgent et al., 2009).

According to Boivin and Hymel (1997), when children have a pessimistic view of their social world they interpret social situations negatively. Variations in social views may impact student perceptions related to bullying. Teachers often downplay bullying and ignore the negative consequences (Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt, & Lemme, 2006). Parents are uncertain of what constitutes bullying which causes over and under reaction. Students perceive friendship problems, arguments, and minor social challenges as bullying. Clarifying perceptions will provide information that could effectively enhance bully prevention programs. Providing information to students and parents regarding the definition of bullying and the forms of bullying may impact prevalence rates and perception.

Direct Physical Aggression. Direct physical aggression is a result of physical contact between the aggressor and the victim (Murphy & Faulkner, 2011). This aggression is signified by hitting, kicking, pushing, biting, and other acts of contact (Murphy & Faulkner, 2011). An aggressive act is defined as bullying only when there is an imbalance of power (Olweus & Limber, 2010). Students with disabilities are seen as different from their non-exceptional peers and an imbalance of power occurs. Studies have indicated that students with disabilities are both victims and aggressors in acts of physical violence (Estell et al., 2009).

Numerous studies have been conducted and while some are closely related in percentages of bullying prevalence rates, others show a vast difference in perceptions of students with and without disabilities. One study indicates that physical bullying is the least frequent form of victimization (Newgent et al., 2009). This would indicate that physical violence is the least likely act of aggression in the school setting.

A recent study revealed that 13% of students reported being the victim of physical bullying (J. Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). However, a study by Litwiller and Brausch (2013) found that 33% of students surveyed reported being a victim of physical bullying. According to their study, these students demonstrate higher rates of suicidality, violent behavior, unsafe sexual behavior, and substance abuse (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013). The conflicting results of these studies indicates a need for further research.

A study conducted by Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005) indicated that 14.7% of children experienced the physical hitting and kicking form of bullying. Elementary students may not display all of these behaviors at their current age level but this data predicts outcomes for future behaviors. Students in middle school tend to be more aggressive and resort to physical violence (Haltigan & Vaillancourt, 2014).

According to Rose et al. (2011), children with disabilities have higher rates of victimization and fighting with similar rates of bullying as compared to students without disabilities. Students with disabilities reported fighting behaviors as a result of victimization at a higher rate than students without disabilities (Rose et al., 2011). It is unclear as to why students with disabilities are more likely to resort to physical violence as a form of self-preservation or protection.

Direct Verbal Aggression. Direct verbal aggression causes behavioral disturbances in the classroom, relational problems between students, and self-esteem issues for victims (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2009). This form of bullying impacts student performance and psyche. When students choose to verbally abuse other students, or make threats against them, the sense of community in the classroom is disturbed. Direct Verbal aggression is directly

related to poor school attendance, low self-esteem, and diminished academic achievement (Morgan & Sideridis, 2013)

Verbal aggression consists of name calling, badgering, teasing, and verbal abuse (Murphy & Faulkner, 2011). Verbal victimization was reported by students as the second most frequent form of bullying (Newgent et al., 2009). This form of bullying is often confused with children just being children. However, there is research indicating that this form of bullying is the most prevalent and can cause multiple social and emotional challenges.

In one recent study, J. Wang et al. (2009) reported that 37% of students indicated victimization via some form of verbal bullying. A study by W. Wang et al. (2014) found that the two most common forms of bullying included calling someone mean names and social exclusion. In a study by Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005), revealed that 30.9% of students reported being bullied through name calling. Elementary students frequently complain about someone calling them a name or not letting them play. Studies are needed to determine the extent of bullying behaviors versus normal childhood behaviors that are being perceived as bullying.

Indirect Relational Aggression. Indirect relational aggression includes social exclusion, rumors, and having things hidden or taken away (Murphy & Faulkner, 2011). One study shows that students report indirect relational victimization is the most frequent form of victimization (Newgent et al., 2009). It was found that rejection by peers and bullying are directly related to psychological problems (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013). A study by Fekkes, Pijpers, Verloove-Vanhorick, and (2005) found that 17.2% of students reported bullying by being ignored or not allowed to participate. Students need to learn healthy coping behaviors to battle bullying to prevent psychological issues later in life. (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013).

Research indicates a link between bullying and children's mental and physical health. Bullying poses a health risk to all students involved. Proper education and training for teachers, students and parents is imperative to a successful bully prevention program. In the school setting classroom management styles, individual personalities, and teacher/student attitudes can undermine prevention programs (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2013). Parents can take action by being supportive of their child, asking questions to find out the facts, teach your child strategies to deal with a bully, contact the school and avoid negative reactions to the bully's parents or the school (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Perceptions of Bullying

Within the school setting, there are a variety of perceptions regarding bullying. Bradshaw et al. (2007) found that 33% of students reported being victims of frequent bullying. Students often feel uncomfortable reporting bullying due to fear of repercussions by the bully. Students may also fail to report bullying if they do not perceive the teacher is receptive to the information (Dickinson, 2006). Self-efficacy and maturity also play a role in student perceptions of bullying, comfort in the classroom, and likelihood of seeking help when they are victimized (Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2014). Students with disabilities are often perceived as less mature and different from their peers making them different from others and therefore a target for the bullying dynamic (Yahn, 2012).

A study by Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005), indicated that communication is one of the leading problems for victims and bullies. The study revealed a lack of communication between teachers, children, and parents regarding bullying (Fekkes et al., 2005). The problem seems to exist due to the perception that when students report bullying, the situation does not improve. Another problem involves teachers underestimating the significance

of bullying reports and minimizing reaction, therefore making the victim feel unheard (Dickinson, 2006).

The problem with studies of perception involves a lack of understanding for students reporting bullying. Students may report bullying in a behavioral study and when cross compared to a definition based single item questionnaire not report the same occurrences (Sawyer, 2008). Student perceptions can change from one moment to the next depending on socialization factors, fear of reporting and longing to belong (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & O'Brennan, 2013). The variations in data can be a result of misunderstanding the definition fear of reporting, and socialization factors.

Self-efficacy and Effort. Children have a difficult time with self-efficacy as they are developing and maturing. They need adult supervision and guidance to teach them important life skills. Students with disabilities often mature at a slower rate than students without disabilities (Estell et al., 2009). Although developmental constructs say that children should perform certain tasks at a given age, not all children develop at the same rate. Students who are less mature will have lower self-efficacy and will put forth less effort to prevent bullying without adult intervention.

According to Veenstra et al. (2014), students were more comfortable in classrooms where teacher effort was related to bullying reduction. Students were more likely to exert personal ability to overcome bullying situations in a classroom where the climate promotes all students working together in a bully-free environment (Veenstra et al., 2014). Teachers and students should work together to promote a safe classroom climate where all students are valued and appreciated.

A cooperative learning environment where neither the student or the teacher shifts responsibility to the other party in a bullying incidence is proven to be effective in preventing bullying (Veenstra et al., 2014). When teachers downplay the severity of bullying it can impact social/emotional problems for chronic bully victims later in life (Bradshaw et al., 2007). Passivity in students encourages victimization. Students lacking self-efficacy with a passive personality are targets to bullies because of the imbalance of power (Rose et al., 2012). Children with disabilities are noted to have maturational problems which may circumvent passivity (Dickinson, 2006). This is perceived as weakness and causes the imbalance of power which in turn promotes bullying.

In addition to students and teachers, parents should also be involved in preventing bullying. A study by Burkhart, Knox, and Brockmyer (2013) revealed that ineffective parenting in a variety of ways, including withholding affection, corporal punishment, and inconsistent discipline can be a cause of aggressiveness and bullying. Another study by Bradshaw and Waasdorp (2009) linked poverty levels, school failure, community violence, and other factors to bullying and school climate. These external factors contribute to the bullying dynamic and deserves consideration when seeking an effective prevention program.

Bullying and Students with Disabilities

Bullies often target students based on their difference from the majority of their peers (Yahn, 2012). Students with disabilities are targeted because of their perceived differences. In a national study of prevalence rates, Blake et al. (2012) found that rates of bullying victimization among students with disabilities exceeded national rates of bullying for students without disabilities. Students with disabilities often struggle with social interaction skills including playing with others and behaviors leading to acceptance by others (Dickinson, 2006). Students

with disabilities struggle with social competence due to the nature of their disability; therefore, there is a possibility they are more exposed to bullying situations.

Characteristics associated with students with disabilities place them at risk of being a victim of bullying or being the perpetrator (Rose et al., 2012). Students with disabilities have characteristics such as low self-worth, anxiety, impulsiveness, and poor social skills (Dickinson, 2006). When a child's social skills are not properly developed they may be at higher risk of bully victimization. Studies have found that students with disabilities are two times as likely to identify themselves or be identified as bullies or victims (Rose et al., 2011). The literature also suggests that students with disabilities are frequent victims and perpetrators in bullying incidents (Rose et al., 2011).

Students with small, inconsequential differences, like size or color, are targeted as well. When this happens, there is no significant imbalance of power as described in the definition of bullying. However, society dictates attitudes and feelings of dominance which places power into the hands of the bully who meets the criteria of the dominant culture (Yahn, 2012). Students without disabilities which simply have different physical characteristics may be equally exposed to bullying instances as children with disabilities.

Effects of Bullying

A student's difficulties with bullying can affect academic performance, social and emotional wellbeing, and friendships (Balfanz et al., 2007). Bullying victims often have lower grades and exhibit different developmental levels than their peers (Berkowitz & Benbenishty, 2012). Some studies reveal that students with disabilities are more likely to be victims of bullying than students without disabilities (Blake et al., 2012). Students with disabilities often

become targets because they are different. Other studies show that students without disabilities face bullying at similar or equal rates as students with disabilities (Rose et al., 2011).

Academic Challenges. Bullied children suffer academically with poorer grades and higher rates of absenteeism (Barhight, Hubbard, & Hyde, 2013). Being bullied causes negative perceptions of school and staff (Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto, & Toblin, 2005). Children with disabilities struggle academically depending on the nature of their disability. According to Raskauskas and Modell (2011), children who are rejected or victimized by their peers are more likely to exhibit physical, behavioral, learning, and social challenges. A study by Rueger and Jenkins (2014) revealed that psychological problems explain social maladjustment, victimization, and academic problems. The study also indicated reducing psychological problems as a point of intervention (Rueger & Jenkins, 2014).

Successful schools teach children academic curriculum as well as social interaction and respect for others. Without all of these constructs, schools will continue to struggle to meet stringent federal and state standards. Both boys and girls report academic struggles due to bullying (Rueger & Jenkins, 2014). Schools who do not implement a comprehensive bullying/social skills curriculum will have problems meeting rigid academic standards.

Friendship Problems. The social context of bullying is often the most difficult and has inspired programs that focus on bullies, victims, and bystanders (Veenstra et al., 2014). Bullying has been linked to the goal of one feeling superior to others (Veenstra et al., 2014). Ongoing strong social support is needed to promote effective prevention programs.

Social learning theory explains that we learn through observation of others, and imitating those behaviors (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010). Children who bully have been known to

lack parental warmth and involvement, supervision, and consistency in the home (Limber, 2004). Children learn from watching the behavior of others. Because groups have certain expectations about how we should behave, the school environment becomes crucial to the role of bullies. The social learning theory indicates that bullying is a learned behavior; therefore, strong social support from the teacher and peers can promote a safe classroom environment (Aronson et al., 2010).

Students with disabilities require social support from teachers and peers to assist them in forming friendships. Adults often underestimate the social impact of bullying (Limber, 2004). These students are often not as mature as their peers which results in difficulty forming friendships. The social rejection can cause social/emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem, academic difficulties, and social ostracism which follow the student into adulthood (Rose et al., 2011). Students who are victimized have difficulty forming relationships with their peers which leaves them further ostracized (O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Sawyer, 2009). Youths who bully or are victims of bullying lack appropriate social skills which further exacerbates the difficulty with peers (O'Brennan et al., 2009). The social learning theory links classroom and school climate to the success of bully prevention programs and promotes positive teacher interaction (Limber, 2004).

Social/Emotional Challenges. According to Holt, Finkelhor, and Kantor (2007) and a growing body of research, there is a connection between bullying and a comprehensive range of other internalizing problems including loneliness, depression and suicidal ideation. A study by Olweus in 1995 found that children who were chronically victimized in their youth had significantly lower self-esteem and were more depressed than their non-victimized peers at the

age of 23. Bullying impacts the long-term psychological wellbeing of victims and bullies (Holt et al., 2007).

Bullies can make other students feel insecure, unhappy, and overly anxious (Olweus, 1995). These feelings of inadequacy cause victims to lose focus on school, become fixated on constant fear, and dread going to school. Bullying is a serious offense that causes emotional scarring that can carry over into adulthood and hamper the victim's ability to become productive, confident, and mentally healthy adults (Haltigan & Vaillancourt, 2014). Countless studies have investigated a variety of bullying aspects to help find a solution to the problem. Student perception is important to determine adequate prevention methods that will alleviate the aggressive behavior and promote a safe and healthy school environment for all students.

Bullied children are more likely to show anxiety and experience psychosomatic complaints (Barhight et al., 2013), show signs of depression more than their non-bullied peers (Haltigan & Vaillancourt, 2014), suffer academically (Barhight et al., 2013), and suffer tragic consequences such as suicide and/or homicide (Brunstein Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007). Bullying also results in more frequent discipline referrals and increased risk for substance abuse for the bully (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013). Due to all of these problems, bullying is becoming a public health risk and is in the spotlight as a danger to America's youth. Stopping bullying is an important goal for school and health officials (Fekkes et al., 2005).

Research Question

Perception plays an integral role in the success of anti-bullying programs. Determining student feelings and ideas related to friendship and bullying can promote change in programs and

exert positive transformation. What are student perceptions about friendship and bullying for intermediate students with disabilities and intermediate students without disabilities?

Chapter 3: Procedures and Methods

The purpose of this study explores attitudes and perceptions about bullying for intermediate students with disabilities and intermediate students without disabilities. One of the most common complaints for elementary students entails dealing with bullying in schools. Student perception surveys measure attitudes and help define characteristics for an effective bully prevention program. This chapter provides a description of the methods used to examine this topic, the research question, a description of the research design and an explanation about how data was collected.

Research Question

Perception plays an integral role in the success of anti-bullying programs. Research focused on determining student feelings and ideas related to bullying provide information for development of effective prevention programs. What are student perceptions about bullying for intermediate students with disabilities and intermediate students without disabilities? Answering this question will provide insight into progressive change to promote a bully free school zone and student success. How do students with disabilities and students without disabilities form equitable friendships with peers? This will help identify problems related to friendship for all students.

Research Design

Setting and Participants. Participants for this project were intermediate school students with disabilities and intermediate school students without disabilities in a small urban/rural setting in Southern West Virginia. The school has a total enrollment of 333 students comprising grades 3 through 5. The number of students receiving free or reduced lunch is 100%. The ethnic

makeup of the school consists of 204 white students (61%) of which 110 are male and 94 are female, 109 African American students (32%) of which 61 are male and 48 are female, 16 multiple race students (5%) of which 6 are male and 10 are female, 2 Asian students (1%) of which 1 is male and 1 is female, and 2 Hispanic students (1%) of which both are female. The school employs 26 full time teachers and 2 part time teachers, including 5 ½ Title I teachers. There are 61(18%) students identified as students with disabilities under IDEA and 26 (8%) students with a 504 due to disabilities not identifiable under IDEA.

Procedures. The principal at the selected intermediate school was contacted in order to obtain permission to gather information from all students by means of paper/pencil survey (see Appendix D). The researcher randomly selected 2 students with disabilities and 2 students without disabilities for the study. Parents completed the parental consent form allowing permission for their child to participate in the study (see Appendix B). Prior to survey administration, the researcher reviewed child assent with the participants, checked for understanding, and had students sign stating that they were willing to participate in the study (see Appendix C). The survey was administered to each student individually by the school counselor with the classroom teacher present. The counselor explained the survey and informed students that they did not have to participate. The counselor read the directions and each question to the students and scribed each answer for the participants. After students completed the 20 question rating scale portion of the survey, the interviewer read the essay questions to the students and recorded student answers as a scribe on the survey form. Once the survey was completed the counselor collected and stored the surveys in a locked file cabinet. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey completed by the participants of this study.

Student Survey. Students were asked to verbally answer a 20 question survey consisting of demographic information and Likert Scaled questions while the researcher recorded the information on the survey form for each student. The counselor read each question aloud to students due to their age and possible reading difficulties. The Likert questions were based on a three point scale. Students were asked questions regarding their feelings and perceptions related to bullying and friendship. The counselor reviewed the definition of bullying before starting the survey. Questions addressed physical bullying, verbal bullying, social bullying, friendship, and general school climate questions. The final question on the survey provides students with an opportunity to provide data related to where bullying occurs in the school. The survey required students to encompass their personal feelings and perceptions regarding bullying and friendship. Students were then provided the opportunity to answer questions in extended form related to specific events in their school career that involves bullying. The interviewer asked the questions and as the students answered, the interviewer transcribed the information on the survey form. Demographics addressed student race, age, sex, current grade level, and disability status.

Chapter 4: Results

Knowledge of student perceptions related to bullying and friendship from the perspective of students without disabilities and students with disabilities can provide information useful to the development of prevention programs targeted at specific populations. The questions in the survey were designed to gain information related to specific types of bullying including physical, verbal, and friendship bullying. Additional information was obtained through interview to collect more detail related to perceptions and personal experiences.

A total of four students participated in the survey, providing a 100% return rate. Of these participants, 50% were students without disabilities, 1 male and 1 female selected randomly from WVEIS and 50% were students with disabilities 1 male and 1 female selected randomly from WVEIS. Both of the students with disabilities were classified Specific Learning Disability.

Section 1 of the survey focused on general perceptions related to bullying and friendship in school. Students were asked to respond to each question with never, sometimes (once or twice a week), and every day. Each form of bullying was explained by reading the description on the survey. Section 2 of the survey provided students with questions answered in a narrative form that allowed them to provide specific details or encounters related to bullying in the school. The researcher read the entire survey and interview to each student individually and recorder the students responses on the form.

Section 1 in the survey is related to physical bullying. The interviewer described physical bullying as hitting kicking, biting, or showing someone that they are weaker. Question 1 asked students if bullying is a problem at their school, 1 (50%) student without disabilities responded never, 1 (50%) student without disabilities responded sometimes, 2 (100%) students with disabilities responded every day.

Question 2 asked if students had ever been physically bullied, 1 (50%) student without disabilities responded never, 1 (50%) student without disabilities responded sometimes and 2 (100%) students with disabilities responded sometimes (once or twice a week).

Question 3 asked if the student had ever been threatened with physical bullying, 1(50%) student with disabilities responded never, 1 (50%) student with disabilities and 2 (100%) students without disabilities responded sometimes (once or twice a week). Students with disabilities responded 50% never and 50% sometimes while students without disabilities responded 50% that they had been threatened with physical bullying sometimes (once or twice a week).

Question 4 asked if the student ever watched someone be physically bullied and did not try to stop it, all 4 students responded that they had never seen physical bullying and did not try to stop it. 100% of students reported that they would never watch someone be physically bullied and not try to stop it.

Question 5 asked if the student ever physically bullied or threatened to physically bully another student, 2 (100%) students with disabilities responded never and 2 (100%) students without disabilities responded sometimes (once or twice a week).

Section 2 of the survey is related to verbal bullying. The interviewer described verbal bullying as teasing, put downs or insults. Question 6 asked students if they had ever been verbally bullied, 2 students with disabilities responded sometimes (once or twice a week) while 2 students without disabilities responded every day. 100% of special education respondents reported that they are verbally bullied sometimes and 100% of students without disabilities responded that they are verbally bullied every day.

Question 7 asked if students ever watched someone be verbally bullied and did not try to stop it, 1 student with disabilities responded never, 1 special education responded sometimes (once or twice a week) and 2 students without disabilities responded sometimes (once or twice a week). Students with disabilities were split with 50% reporting they have never watched someone be verbally bullied and did not try to stop it while 50% reported that they sometimes watch someone be verbally bullied and did not try to stop it, 100% of students without disabilities reported that they sometimes (once or twice a week) saw someone being verbally bullied and did not try to stop it.

Question 8 ask students if they have verbally bullied another student, 2 (100%) students with disabilities reported that they never verbally bully another student while 2 (100%) students without disabilities reported that they sometimes verbally bully other students.

Section 3 of the survey pertains to group/friendship bullying. The interviewer explained this form of bullying as getting others to repeatedly ignore or exclude someone on purpose.

Question 9 asked if the student was bullied by a group of kids, 1 student with disabilities and 1 student without disabilities reported being group/friendship bullied sometimes (once or twice a week) and 1 student with disabilities and 1 student without disabilities reported being group/friendship bullied every day. Students with disabilities reported 50% were friendship/group bullied sometimes and 50% reported being friendship/group bullied every day. Students without disabilities reported at the same rate as students with disabilities related to their personal experiences with group/friendship bullying.

Question 10 asked students if they have watched someone else being bullied by a group of kids and did not try to stop it, 2 (100%) students with disabilities reported that they never watched someone be bullied by a group and did not try to stop it and 2 (100%) students without

disabilities reported that they sometimes (once or twice a week) watched someone be bullied and did not try to stop it.

Question 11 asked if the student ever ignored or excluded another student on purpose, 2 (100%) students with disabilities reported that they never ignored or excluded another student on purpose while 2 (100%) students without disabilities reported that they sometimes (once or twice a week) purposefully excluded or ignored another student.

The final section of the survey asked questions related to friendship. Students indicated to the interviewer that they knew the meaning of friendship without explanation. Question 12 asked students if they could count on their friends, 2 (100%) students with disabilities reported that they can count on their friends every day and 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that they could count on their friends every day while 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that they could count on their friends sometimes (once or twice a week).

Question 13 asked participants if they could make friends easily, 1 (50%) student with disabilities and 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that they sometimes make friends easily while 1 (50%) student with disabilities and 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that they make friends easily every day.

Question 14 asked if students felt their friends treated them with respect, 1 (50%) student with disabilities reported that their friends treated them with respect sometimes and 1 (50%) student with disabilities reported that their friends treated them with respect every day while 2 (100%) students without disabilities reported that their friends treated them with respect sometimes.

Question 15 asked if people would think they were a good friend, 1 (50%) student with disabilities and 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that people think they are a good friend sometimes and 1(50%) student with disabilities and 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that people think they are a good friend every day.

Question 16 asked students if their friends ever bully them, 1 (50%) student with disabilities reported that their friends never bully them and 1 (50%) student with disabilities and 2 (100%) students without disabilities reported that their friends sometimes bully them.

Question 17 asked students if they would like to have more friends, 2 (100%) students with disabilities reported that they would like to have more friends every day while 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that they would never like to have more friends and 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that they sometimes would like to have more friends.

Question 18 asked students if their friends protect them, 1 (50%) student with disabilities and 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that they sometimes feel that their friends protect them while 1(50%) student with disabilities and 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that their friends protect them every day.

Question 19 asked students if students in the school get along well together, 1 (50%) student with disabilities reported that students never get along well in the school while 1 (50%) student with disabilities reported that students get along well in the school every day and 2 (50%) students without disabilities reported that students sometimes get along well in the school.

Question 20 asked students if they felt safe in the school, 1 (50%) student with disabilities reported that they never feel safe in the school and 1 (50%) student with disabilities reported that they feel safe in the school every day while 1 (50%) student without disabilities

reported that they sometimes feel safe in the school while 1 (50%) student without disabilities reported that they feel safe in the school every day.

All of the students were asked where bullying happens in the school, 1 student with disabilities reported in the cafeteria, recess, gym, bus, hallway and bathroom, 1 student with disabilities reported recess, gym and the hallway, 1 student without disabilities reported cafeteria, recess, bus, hallway, bathroom and in class sometimes, 1 student without disabilities reported recess, bus, hallway and sometimes in gym.

Question 1 of the narrative portion of the interview asked students what they thought made a good friend 1 student with disabilities said, “make them happy and play every day”, 1 student with disabilities indicated that a good friend, “always has your back, listens to you, helps you, is nice, always helps you when you are getting bullied and will stay your friend as long as you live”, 1 student without disabilities indicated that, “respect” makes a good friend and 1 student without disabilities indicated that a good friend, “keeps your secrets, you can say anything to them, they understand you, you have someone to confide in and trust”.

Question 2 of the narrative section asked if the students friends have ever been mean to them. All four students said “yes”. One student with disabilities indicated that, “they didn’t know why their friend was mean to them, they were just a bad friend. He bit me and threatened to hit me with a glass plate. He tried to push me. He got me in trouble one time. He didn’t share. He didn’t help. He lied to me.” Another student with disabilities said, “sometimes they get mad at me when they think I did something but I haven’t once or twice a week.” A student without disabilities said “sometimes we get mad and say mean things to each other then the next day we are best friends again.” Another student without disabilities said, “they leave me out. They call me names like ugly.”

Question 3 of the narrative asked it if was easy for the student to make friends. One student with disabilities indicated no that it is not easy for them to make friends while one student with disabilities and both students without disabilities indicated that they did make friends easily.

Question 4 of the narrative asked if there are people that the student would like to be friends with and can't (if yes, why do you think that happens). Both students with disabilities reported yes to this question. One student answered, "they reject my friendship and be mean when I try to be friends with them. It's hard to be someone's friend when they are mean to you. I don't know why everyone says I am just annoying." The other student with disabilities said, "yes, but sometimes they be mean to me. They copy me, be mean to me and jump on me." One student without disabilities answered no and one student without disabilities answered yes, "because my other fiends make me say away from them. They say they are mean but they are really not."

Question 5 asked the students what they think bullying means? One student with disabilities responded, "bullying to me means showing anger by being mean to people and making them feel like life is not worth living. No one can stop bullying." The other student with disabilities said, "someone is being mean to you a lot of the time." One student without disabilities responded, "to talk bad about someone or tell them something that is really mean saying things to intentionally hurt someone." The other student without disabilities said, "not treating others the way you want to be treated"

Question 6 asked students if they have ever been bullied (if yes, tell me what happened). One student with disabilities responded no but then stated that they had been "called names, had things stolen from me, punched in the face, beat up on my birthday, lying to me, people don't

know how to act with me, they try to make me angry to get me in trouble.” The other student with disabilities said, “yes, calling me names, two girls got me in trouble and got me assigned seat. They call me names every day and they call me a bad word.” Both regular education students indicated yes to the question. One said, “called me names that weren’t necessary, girl drama, and a boy telling lies on me.” The other student without disabilities said, “a guy punched me in the face on the bus. I told on him because he had gum. He said I am going to get my fist dirty and he hit me.”

Question 7 asked if the student had ever seen someone else getting bullied (if yes, tell me about it). Both students with disabilities said yes. One student with disabilities said, “RJ got bullied. He was playing basketball and his teammate laughed at him when he fell down.” The other student with disabilities said, “getting cussed at, called names, physically getting punched and stuff.” Both students without disabilities indicated yes on the question. One student without disabilities said, “calling names, killing signs, and saying they are going to fight you.” The other student without disabilities said, “pushing them, calling them names and picking on them every day.”

The table below indicates the results comparing total number of students responding to the question (TN), the number of students without disabilities responding to the question (R), and the number of students with disabilities responding to the question (S) with a percentage of the total number of students regular and special education responding to the question. The table indicates the responses for each individual question on the survey.

Relationship	Res pon den ts	Never				Sometimes (once or twice a week)				Every Day			
		(N)	TN	R	S	%	TN	R	S	%	TN	R	S
(N) total respondents. TN- total for question response R – student w/o disabilities S – students with disabilities	(N)	TN	R	S	%	TN	R	S	%	TN	R	S	%
Q1 Bullying is a problem at this school	4	1	1		25	1	1		25	2		2	50
Q2 I have been physically bullied	4	1	1		25	3	1	2	75	0			0
Q3 I have been threatened with physical bullying	4	1		1	25	3	2	1	75	0			0
Q4 I watched someone else being physically bullied and did not try to stop it	4	4	2	2	100	0			0	0			0
Q5 I have physically bullied or threatened to physically bully another student	4	2		2	50	2	2		50	0			0
Q6 I have been verbally bullied	4	0			0	2		2	50	2	2		50
Q7 I watched someone be verbally bullied and did not try to stop it	4	1		1	25	3	2	1	75	0			0
Q8 I have verbally bullied another student	4	2		2	50	2	2		50	0			0
Q9 I have been bullied by a group of kids	4	0			0	2	1	1	50	2	1	1	50
Q10 I have watched someone else being bullied by a group of kids and did not try to stop it.	4	2		2	50	2	2		50	0			0
Q11 I have ignored or excluded another student on purpose	4	2		2	50	2	2		50	0			0
Q12 I can count on my friends to help me and be there for me	4	0			0	1	1		25	3	1	2	75
Q13 I make friends easily	4	0			0	2	1	1	50	2	1	1	50
Q14 My friends treat me with respect	4	0			0	3	2	1	75	1		1	25
Q15 People think I am a good friend	4	0			0	2	1	1	50	2	1	1	50
Q16 My friends bully me	4	1		1	25	3	2	1	75	0			0
Q17 I would like to have more friends	4	1	1		25	1	1		25	2		2	50
Q18 My friends protect me	4	0			0	2	1	1	50	2	1	1	50
Q19 Students in this school get along well together	4	1		1	25	2	2		50	1		1	25
Q20 I feel safe in this school	4	1		1	25	1	1		25	2	1	1	50

Limitations

It is important to note that although the results have statistical significance, they have limited generalizability due to the small study sample. Sample size was limited due to time constraints and required parental permission for student surveys.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research focused on the perceptions of students with disabilities versus the perceptions of students without disabilities related to physical, verbal, and social bullying and friendship in an intermediate school setting. The research was conducted to determine if students with and without disabilities perceive bullying differently. Determining student feelings and ideas related to bullying can promote change in bully prevention programs and exert positive transformation to promote a bully free school zone and student success.

As stated previously, the prevalence of bullying in the United States has become a concern to school administrators, teachers, school counselors, parents, and students. According to the data, special education and regular education intermediate students often feel powerless. Anti-bullying programs have exploded into popularity. However, the question remains, how can bullying be prevented? Victims and targets of bullies feel that bullying is a lifelong sentence that they must learn to endure as indicated by one student with disabilities who stated during an interview, “bullying to me means showing anger by being mean to people and making them feel like life is not worth living. No one can stop bullying.”

Perceptions of Bullying

Bullied students often become statistics for academic difficulty, social/emotional problems and difficulty forming and maintaining friendships (Balfanz et al., 2007). Regular and students with disabilities in the intermediate school maintain an optimistic attitude despite relational problems in the school setting. However, one student with disabilities was pessimistic as related to bullying in the schools, but very optimistic about his personal friendships. This student had a difficult time interpreting social situations with students other than his friends in a

positive manner. Students without disabilities reported instances of bullying in the school at a slightly lower rate than students with disabilities students. This could be tied to optimism, maturation levels, social adjustment, or an overall sense of well-being in the school setting.

In this study students were surveyed based on three types of bullying: physical, verbal, and group/friendship bullying. Current data indicates variance in perceptions related to students with and without disabilities encountering all types of bullying in the school setting. Both groups of students indicated victimization related to bullying, however; students with disabilities indicating slightly higher frequency of all types of bullying.

There was some discrepancy in the rating scale questions and the interview questions for students with disabilities. When asked to describe instances of bullying, students with disabilities were very passionate in their detailed descriptives which made it appear that bullying occurs regularly throughout every school day, while the rating scale indicated that bullying occurs once or twice a week for some forms of bullying and every day for other forms. This discrepancy could be related to a lack of student cognitive ability in answering rating scale questions although students appeared to understand the definitions, questions, and answer process.

Students without disabilities and students with disabilities perceived friendship problems, arguments, and minor social challenges as bullying despite their clear understanding of the definition of bullying which includes “activity of repeated, aggressive behavior intended to hurt another individual, physically, mentally or emotionally (Olweus, 1995). According to the interview questions, students misinterpret the term bullying for relational problems that are not clear and consistent forms of bullying. All of the students described incidents where they had personally been bullied; however, all of the accounts would not fit the definition of bullying as

long periods of time are related. Prior to surveying students, the researcher read the definition of each form of bullying and checked for understanding with the students. Each student had a clear understanding of the terminology and examples related to each form of bullying.

Results indicate that students with disabilities perceived that physical bullying is a problem in the school. During the interview, these students appeared to have a clear understanding of bullying as they stated, “bullying means that someone is being mean to you a lot of the time”, and “bulling means showing anger by being mean to people and making them feel like life is not worth living.” Students without disabilities responded with answers that indicate an understanding of bullying, but omitted to include the duration of time needed for an event to be described as bullying in their understanding.

The data indicates that intermediate students have a difficult time comprehending the definition of bullying. Young children feel that bullying involves every instance where another child is cruel or unkind, despite student knowledge related to the definition of bullying which involves persistent harm inflicted upon another person (Olweus, 1995). Interview questions indicate that regular education and students with disabilities confuse single instance relational problems with bullying. Student perceptions indicate a need for change in bully prevention programs to clarify student misconception of what constitutes bullying. Students have a clear understanding of the definition of bullying; however, they struggle with classifying individual events as bullying or typical relational issues among children. This could be because each instance of bullying or relational problems is equally traumatic for children. When either event transpires, the student recognizes that something socially unacceptable is occurring, but they have difficulty distinguishing which is a consistent pattern of bullying and which is a single

instance of socially unacceptable behavior as a result of a short term external factor such as an argument or short term disagreement.

Direct Physical Aggression

Direct physical aggression is a result of physical contact between the aggressor and the victim, this aggression is signified by hitting, kicking, pushing, biting, and other acts of contact (Murphy & Faulkner, 2011). Students with disabilities are seen as different from their non-exceptional peers and an imbalance of power occurs. According to the data, students with disabilities surveyed indicated that they have experienced physical bullying, verbal bullying and group/friendship bullying. Students with disabilities also reported never perpetrating acts of bullying verbally, physically, or group/friendship on other students which contradicts studies that indicated that students with disabilities are both victims and aggressors in acts of physical violence (Estell et al., 2009).

This study indicated that physical bullying occurs for students without disabilities and students with disabilities at least once or twice a week, with one student with disabilities indicating that he has never been physically bullied. However, this student was clearly disturbed by bullying in the school setting as he indicated that bullying occurs in the school every day and he feels unsafe in the school. One student without disabilities also indicated never being bullied.

This study reveals that regular and students with disabilities report physical bullying at the same rate, 50% indicating it happens to them once or twice a week while 50% report it never happens to them (each category is split with 1 special education and 1 student without disabilities). This study revealed that students with disabilities report never physically bullying others while students without disabilities reported sometimes (once or twice a week) physically

bullying other students. This reveals a discrepancy in the study performed by Rose (2011) which indicated that students with disabilities are more likely to respond with physical aggression.

All of the students indicated that they have not watched someone be physically bullied and did nothing to stop it. This indicates clear ownership in the school environment, and compassion for others by all students despite some feelings of danger in the school by 25% of the students without disabilities and 25% of the students with disabilities. Students with disabilities indicated that bullying is a problem in the school every day while students without disabilities reported 50% never and 50% sometimes (once or twice a week). This would indicate that students with disabilities are bullied daily in the school setting. Students reported feeling safe in the schools despite reports of daily and weekly bullying instances.

Direct Verbal Aggression

Direct verbal aggression causes behavioral disturbances in the classroom, relational problems between students, and self-esteem issues for victims (Bradshaw et al., 2009). Verbal aggression consists of name calling, badgering, teasing, and verbal abuse (Murphy & Faulkner, 2011). Verbal victimization was reported by students as the most frequent form of bullying in this study. Students with disabilities reported being verbally bullied once or twice a week while 100% of students without disabilities reported being verbally bullied every day. Students without disabilities also reported frequent verbal aggression by their friends (once or twice a week). It is unclear if the verbal aggression constitutes bullying or single instances of arguments.

This form of bullying is often confused with children just being children. However, the research indicates that special education and students without disabilities suffer from direct

verbal aggression once or twice a week with 100% of students without disabilities indicating verbal aggression every day. This study revealed that 100% of students surveyed were directly victimized by verbal bullying in the form of name calling, cursing, and acts of verbal intimidation to humiliate the victim at least once or twice during the school week. The data reveals that children need more concrete socialization instruction and direct supervision to prevent the “children are just being children” perception.

Students without disabilities reported a higher rate of verbal bullying than students with disabilities. During the interview students with and students without disabilities indicated “name calling, getting cussed at, drama, killing signs (ex. slicing the finger across the throat), and having friendship rejected.” Interestingly, students without disabilities indicated that they have verbally bullied others once or twice a week and that they watch others be bullied while taking no action to stop it. Students with disabilities indicated that they have not verbally bullied another student and 25% reported that they have watched someone be verbally bullied once or twice a week and did not try to stop it. Research indicates that students with disabilities are often the bully due to emotional and behavioral disturbances or frustration with the school environment; however, this research indicates that students without disabilities reported being the bully once or twice a week while students with disabilities reported that they never bully others verbally, physically or in a group.

Indirect Relational Aggression

Indirect relational aggression includes social exclusion, rumors, and having things hidden or taken away (Murphy & Faulkner, 2011). One study shows that students report indirect relational victimization is the most frequent form of victimization (Newgent et al., 2009). The current study confirms that indirect relational aggression is a problem for students without

disabilities and students with disabilities. Students with disabilities report a 100% rate of daily relational aggression while students without disabilities report at 50% being relationally bullied once or twice a week and 50% reporting they are a victim of relational aggression every day. Interview questions indicate that one student with disabilities needs assistance with coping mechanisms related to bullying as he responded “bullying means showing anger by being mean to people and making them feel like life is not worth living.”

Conclusion

Elementary students frequently complain about someone calling them a name or not letting them play. This study reveals that students perceive themselves as being verbally bullied at least once or twice a week. The extent of bullying behaviors versus normal childhood behaviors that are being perceived as bullying is not clearly indicated; however, students did not relate verbal aggression to one particular bully in their classroom, rather they indicated it is a problem school-wide. The study reveals that perceptions of bullying between students with disabilities and students without disabilities vary. Students with disabilities indicated being victimized by bullying at a higher rate than students without disabilities and they report lower rates of being the bully than students without disabilities. The study indicates a need for differentiated instruction related to character education and bullying that will help every student grasp socialization skills and promote safe and healthy schools while gaining an understanding of what constitutes bullying.

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	Never	Sometimes (Once or twice a Week)	Every Day
Physical Bullying – hitting, kicking, biting, or showing someone that they are weaker			
1. Bullying is a problem at this school	1	2	3
2. I have been physically bullied	1	2	3
3. I have been threatened with physical bullying	1	2	3
4. I watched someone else being physically bullied and did not try to stop it	1	2	3
5. I have physically bullied or threatened to physically bully another student	1	2	3
Verbal Bullying – teasing, put downs, or insults			
6. I have been verbally bullied	1	2	3
7. I watched someone be verbally bullied and did not try to stop it	1	2	3
8. I have verbally bullied another student	1	2	3
Group/Friendship Bullying – getting others to repeatedly ignore or exclude someone on purpose.			
9. I have been bullied by a group of kids	1	2	3
10. I have watched someone else being bullied by a group of kids and did not try to stop it.	1	2	3
11. I have ignored or excluded another student on purpose	1	2	3
Friendship			
12. I can count on my friends to help me and be there for me	1	2	3
13. I make friends easily	1	2	3
14. My friends treat me with respect	1	2	3
15. People think I am a good friend	1	2	3
16. My friends bully me	1	2	3
17. I would like to have more friends	1	2	3
18. My friends protect me	1	2	3
19. Students in this school get along well together	1	2	3

Appendix B

Parental Consent/Permission**Bullying Perceptions: Understanding Students With and Without Disabilities**

[Lori Howard, PH.D.](#), Principal Investigator

Shellie Simpson, School Counselor, Co Investigator

Introduction

Your child is invited (with your permission) to be in a research study. Research studies are designed to gain scientific knowledge that may help other people in the future. Your child may or may not receive any benefit from being part of the study. There may also be risks associated with being part of research studies. If there are any risks involved in this study then they will be described in this consent. Participation is voluntary so please take your time to make your decision, and ask your research investigator or research staff to explain any words or information that you do not understand.

Why Is This Study Being Done?

The purpose of this study is to help gain an understanding of student feelings and perceptions related to bullying and friendships for students with and without disabilities.

How Many Will Take Part In The Study?

Four students from the student body will be selected to participate in this study.

What Is Involved In This Research Study?

Students will be asked to complete a survey/questionnaire during classroom guidance that asks their feelings and ideas related to bullying and friendship. They will then participate in a one on one interview with the researcher to answer questions related to friendship and bullying.

How Long Will Your Child Be In The Study?

Your child will be in the study for about one day/ 30 minutes, until the survey and interview is completed and submitted.

You or your child can decide to stop participation at any time. If you decide to stop your child's participation in the study we encourage you to talk to the study investigator or study staff as soon as possible.

The study investigator may stop your child from taking part in this study at any time if he/she believes it is in your child's best interest; if your child does not follow the study rules; or if the study is stopped.

What Are The Risks Of The Study?

There are no known risks to those who take part in this study.

Are There Benefits To Taking Part In The Study?

If you agree to allow your child to take part in this study, there may or may not be direct benefit to them. We hope the information learned from this study will benefit other people in the future. The benefits of participating in this study may be: to gain an understanding of student perceptions and feelings related to bullying and friendship to help develop appropriate curriculum that will target their concerns.

What About Confidentiality?

We will do our best to make sure that your child's personal information is kept confidential. However, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Federal law says we must keep your child's study records private. Nevertheless, under unforeseen and rare circumstances, we may be required by law to allow certain agencies to view your child's records. Those agencies would include the Marshall University IRB, Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the federal Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP). This is to make sure that we are protecting your child's rights and safety. If we publish the information we learn from this study, your child will not be identified by name or in any other way.

What Are The Costs Of Taking Part In This Study?

There are no costs to you for allowing your child to take part in this study. All the study costs, including any study tests, supplies and procedures related directly to the study, will be paid for by the study.

Will You Be Paid For Participation?

You will receive no payment or other compensation for your child's participation in this study.

What Are Your Rights As A Research Study Participant?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to allow your child to take part or you may withdraw them from the study at any time. Refusing to participate or leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you or your child are entitled. If you decide to stop your child's participation in the study we encourage you to talk to the investigators or study staff first.

Whom Do You Call If You Have Questions Or Problems?

For questions about the study or in the event of a research-related injury, contact the study investigator, [Shellie Simpson](#) at 304-327-8339. You should also call the investigator if you have a concern or complaint about the research.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Marshall University IRB#2 Chairman Dr. Stephen Cooper at (304) 696-7320. You may also call this number if:

- You have concerns or complaints about the research.

- The research staff cannot be reached.
- You want to talk to someone other than the research staff.

You will be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

SIGNATURES

You grant permission for your child _____ to take part in this study. You have had a chance to ask questions about this study and have had those questions answered. By signing this consent form you are stating that you are not giving up any legal rights to which you or your child are entitled.

Parent Name (Printed)

Parent Signature

Date

Students Name (Printed)

Students Signature

Date

Appendix C

Marshall University**Child's Assent for Being in a Research Study**

Title: Understanding student ideas about bullying

Why are you here?

We are asking you to take part in a research study because we are trying to learn more about what kids think and know about bullying. We are inviting you to be in the study because student ideas are an important part of figuring out how bullying affects everyone.

Why are they doing this study?

This study will help gain a better understanding of student ideas about bullying and friendship. Getting an understanding of bullying can help design character education programs that give students the tools they need to be socially successful in school.

What will happen to you?

First, we will go through the survey. I will read the questions to each of you and have you answer them to the best of your ability. Next, we will do an interview where you and I will talk for a bit about your friendships and problems with bullies.

Will the study hurt?

This will take about 30 minutes of your time and it will not hurt you in any way. It will not affect your grade and you can choose not to participate if you do not want to.

Will the study help you?

The study may help you understand the relationships that you have with your friends a little better.

What if you have any questions?

You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can ask me next time you see me or stop by my office.

Do your parents know about this?

This study was explained to your parents and they said that you could be in it if you want. You can talk this over with them before you decide.

Do you have to be in the study?

You do not have to be in the study. No one will be upset if you don't want to do this. If you don't want to be in this study, you just have to tell them. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It's up to you.

Putting a checkmark by the word YES and writing your name after that means that that you agree to be in the study, and know what will happen to you. If you decide to quit the study all you have to do is tell the person in charge.

You have talked to your parents and the researcher about the study. You have had all of your questions answered. You understand that you can withdraw from this study at any time and no one will be angry or upset with you. Indicate your choice below:

(Check One)

___ **YES**, you want to be in the study. ___ **NO**, you do not want to be in the study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Child <i>(Print)</i>	Signature of Child	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Witness <i>(Print)</i>	Signature of Witness	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher <i>(Print)</i>	Signature of Researcher	Date

Appendix D

January 20, 2015

Dear Parent/Guardian:

_____ School has been chosen to participate in a research study. Our school was selected out of the entire county to determine the prevalence rates of bullying. All third, fourth, and fifth graders will be participating. The results of this study will provide our school with valuable information and tools to promote a safe and happy school. Since bullying is an increasing concern to educators and parents across the nation, this study will be used to educate and inform teachers, administrators, and parents. It will also provide valuable information that will help establish new and effective bully prevention programs in our school.

The study will take place from January 20 – May 15, 2015. It will be conducted by Mrs. Shellie Simpson, our School Counselor. She is completing her Masters Degree in Multi-Categorical Special Education at Marshall University and has been employed by _____ County Schools for twelve years. She works directly with the students to promote Character Education and a positive learning environment for our students.

I have reviewed this research study and feel that it is a worthwhile endeavor for our students and our school. Please review the information on the following page in order to make a decision concerning permission consent for your child to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

School Principal