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The Inclusion Classroom: Implementing the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program© To Improve the Classroom Environment

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THE INCLUSION CLASSROOM: IMPLEMENTING THE *OLWEUS BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM©* TO IMPROVE THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Joe Patterson, who was my rock, held me the days I cried, and reminded me that I was doing this to make the education of children like our son more positive for the future. You never doubted me, and I love you for that. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

At White Rose Middle School (WRMS), in the lower Piedmont of South Carolina, students with individualized education plans (IEPs), behavioral intervention plans (BIPs), and 504 Plans were placed in the inclusion classroom setting resulting in repeated negative behavior patterns that drew the attention of their peers. Students assigned to the inclusion classroom included regular education students, students identified with a "learning disability," and students identified as English language learners (ELL). The negative behaviors expressed in the inclusion classroom were categorized as bullying behaviors that disrupted the classroom environment. The purpose of the present action research study was to determine if the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© had an impact on the middle level students identified with "learning disabilities." The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*©, funded by the school district, was implemented for 10 weeks in the inclusion classroom as an intervention to determine its impact on these students. The researcher collected and analyzed data in a concurrent mixed method study. The quantitative data consisted of a bullying knowledge pretest-posttest, a pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior, and a pre- and post-questionnaire of perceived bullying in school. After calculating the differences in means and the dependent samples t-test for each instrument, the bullying knowledge pretest-posttest showed no significant impact on student understanding, the pre- and post-observation of bullying showed no significant impact on bullying behavior in the inclusion classroom, and the pre- and post-questionnaire of perceived bullying showed no

significant impact on the student perceptions of bullying in their environment. Then qualitative data of transcripts from the Olweus classroom lessons were analyzed, resulting in the students struggling to identify bullying situations and applying the strategies taught during the intervention. The short-term intervention of 10-weeks had no significant impact. The implications for further practice discussed the implementation of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* in the middle school, the need to increase teacher participation in the program, a reevaluation of the *OBPP©* pre- and post-questionnaire on perceptions of bullying, and an application of an intensive approach in the inclusion classroom for students identified as having "learning disabilities." Therefore, the longer commitments suggested by the implications supports the claim that the program should be applied over an extended period of time.

Key Words: Bullying, Behavior, Inclusion, Learning Disability, *Olweus*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD .... Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

BiP .... Behavioral Intervention Plan

EBD ....Emotional and Behavior Disorders

ED ....Emotional Disturbance

ELL .... English Language Learner

ESOL .... English Speakers of Other Languages

FBA ....Function-Based Behavioral Analysis

ISS ....In-School Suspension

IEP ....Individualized Education Plans

LD .... Learning Disability

LEP .... Limited English Proficiency

OBPP ....*Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©*

OBQ ....Olweus Bullying Questionnaire

OSS .... Out-of-School Suspension

WRMS .... White Rose Middle School

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At White Rose Middle School(WRMS) (pseudonym) in the lower Piedmont region of South Carolina, students with individualized education plans (IEPs), behavioral intervention plans (BIPs), and 504 Plans frequently drew the gaze of their fellow students in the inclusion classroom when they failed to attend to their work, negatively behaved in the class, and needed special assistance from one of the two co-teachers in the classroom. A 504 Plan is an educational plan for students who do not qualify for an IEP but have a disability. This plan falls under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and is a part of the federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against public school students with disabilities. According to The State of South Carolina Department of Education (SSCDE) (2004), the purpose of educating students with disabilities is "to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living" (p. 2). The term "learning disability" is often used in the United States to identify students who have an official diagnosis by a medical doctor or certified psychologist in the school system with an IEP, BiP, and/or 504 Plan. These students are legally required to receive special services in the U.S. public school system through specifically designed resource classes and inclusion classes. In addition to students with disabilities, students who are "limited English proficient" (LEP) were also placed in the inclusion classroom.

1

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) defined the term limited English proficient as the following:

> An individual (a) who is aged 3 through 21; (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual (i) the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments described in section 1111(b)(3); (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society. (ESEA: Section 9101(25))

The State of South Carolina adheres to these federal requirements. The SSCDE (2014) issued a memorandum that addressed the increasing numbers of LEP students who also identified as having learning disabilities. According to the SSCDE memorandum (2014), "The evaluation team must keep in mind that there must also be evidence of the disability in the student's native language and not only in the English language…. [and] make the

distinction between a language difference and a disability" (Payne, p. 1). Due to this distinction between students with learning disabilities and LEP students, the SSCDE distinguishes between the educational differences impacted by a learning disability and limited English proficiency. The participant researcher of the present action research study was involved with special services at WRMS as a core English teacher with an inclusion classroom. In the literature review of this action research study, progressivism through John Dewey's experience and education, behaviorism through behavior intervention models, historical contexts of special education in the United States education system, the inequality in education during the Civil Rights movement, the impact of school discipline, and the implementation of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* © in schools was investigated. This research was approached through a pragmatic lens to reveal the experience of students in the inclusion classroom as bullying incidents increased the need for social justice.

Background of the Identified Problem of Practice

According to Morningstar et. al. (2015), criteria for implementation of inclusive classrooms in schools should not be segregated by disabilities or needs an should represent the natural proportion of the school. They should also provide Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Response to Intervention (RtI), and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) for all students; while also involving leadership in their staff, community, and families (Morningstar et al., 2015).

The inclusion classrooms at WRMS, where students identified with learning disabilities represent between 45-55% of the population in the inclusion classrooms, were disproportionate in the special education population in comparison with students who did

not receive special education services. Inclusion classes consist of a class that is populated by students with learning disabilities, developing language skills, and students without learning disabilities that are capable of functioning in a regular English or Math class. The inclusion classroom required a regular education teacher co-teaching with a special education teacher, which involved the teachers taking turns teaching elements of the lessons, providing small-group instruction by splitting the class in half, and tutoring students to meet their differentiation needs in the classroom. Inclusion classrooms are supposed to represent the natural population of the school for students with learning disabilities. At WRMS, students with identified learning disabilities comprised 13.4 percent of the total school population, while the inclusion classroom was populated with 44-55 percent of students who were identified as having a learning disability. WRMS practiced placing English language learners (ELL) into the inclusion classroom along with students with learning disabilities. ELL students were not supposed to be assigned to special education classes unless they are identified with a learning disability, but since inclusion classrooms were not only for students with learning disabilities the ELL students are assigned these classes. This proved a challenge, since the co-teaching assignments did not require the teachers to be fluent in the ELL's native language. WRMS incorporated the use of resource classes for students with learning disabilities instead of creating a complete inclusive implementation in the school. Resource classes were elective classes in WRMS that students with IEPs were required to take for extra assistance in their core courses that are not in the inclusive setting. This course requirement prevented these students from participating in Band or Chorus, which are year-long elective classes, because every child in South Carolina is required to take

Physical Education. The difficulty with creating a complete inclusion model at WRMS may have been due to lack of funding to hire paraprofessionals to work within those classes. While the general education teachers and special education co-teachers were implementing differentiation practices within the classroom, the implementation of inclusion at WRMS proved difficult without the needed additional support. Due to WRMS not implementing inclusive practices effectively, students with learning disabilities experienced frustration and feelings of inability in response to more difficult material and the lack of necessary support, which led to these students disrupting the classroom environment and attracting the gaze of their peers who see them as different in the inclusion classroom.

The gaze of student peers toward students with learning disabilities, behavioral and emotional disorders, and English language learners occurred through different incidents during instruction in the inclusion classroom. These incidents frequently led to bullying behaviors between students in the classroom. Students with learning disabilities required extra assistance to gain understanding, so when they attempted to ask a question during whole-group instruction, students who had already gained an understanding of the material responded openly with rude comments about the validity of the question. While the behavior was addressed as inappropriate, these students failed to understand their impact on their peers and continued the behavior. Additionally, English language learners in the inclusion classroom corresponded verbally with each other during instruction and group work. Their interactions involved using profanity in Spanish, which drew the attention of other students suspecting the ELL students were talking negatively about them. The ELL students in the inclusion classroom were emergent readers, so instruction

in English proved ineffective when they understood only a portion of the instruction. Emergent readers were learning through sound and symbol relationships and were developing their reading skills by connecting their learning through their own experiences. ELL students who are emergent readers are considered level 1 or 2 and know little to no English but are placed in the inclusion classroom. Also, the co-teachers were not fluent in Spanish, so the ELL students using profanity in conversation may not have been addressed. The students with behavioral and emotional disorders also drew their peers' gaze. These students exhibited attention-desiring behavior resulting in defiance, verbal outbursts in the classroom, inability to self-regulate their actions, and a need to point out their peers' faults. They laughed at other students when a concept was not understood by them but got angry easily when they were redirected or got an answer wrong themselves. These students were easily frustrated and shut down when they did not understand a concept. Frequently, the special education and general education teachers found that this group of students responded better in a small-group environment, resulting in the class being divided and instruction given separately to the two student groups.

Implementation and discipline at White Rose Middle School. At WRMS, the school-wide positive behavior intervention support (SWPBIS) implementation tracked office referrals through a program called PowerSchool©. WRMS implemented a Tier 1 approach to the positive behavior intervention support and provided a program on the team iPads that served the role of instructing the students individually to target their disruptive behavior. While this was categorized as a targeted approach to intervention, students failed to receive positive mentoring from an adult to help guide them through

learning the expectations in the school. Additionally, the SWPBIS program frequently proved ineffective or failed to function properly while in use, eliminating the chance for students to proceed through the lesson completely. The special education teacher for eighth-grade English Language Arts worked with four different teachers. She remained involved in co-planning with the four teachers but found that the student groups in the four separate inclusion classes varied drastically and had different needs. Due to the differences in teachers and the student populations in each class, the special education teacher had difficulty in planning separately with each teacher to determine how to make the classroom learning environment effective.

The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* lessons addressed correlated constraints, social synchrony, behavior as a developmental catalyst, and systems reorganization environments as contributing factors to behavior; therefore, the students in the inclusion classroom, who were identified as having an emotional and behavioral disability(EBD), would investigate the impact of their environment on how they interact with the world around them. The implementation of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* as a targeted and individualized intervention for students who have Emotional and Behavioral Disorders and disabilities was supported by the correlated constraints and the social synchrony of students with EBD. The interaction between the systems was evident in student behavior that had been impacted by bullying incidents, disciplinary actions in previous classes, and negative home environments. The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* provided students with the opportunity to begin to develop an understanding of the world around them and how to operate successfully in their environment.

WRMS had some difficulties with their implementation of SWPBIS. Possibly due to a higher rate of poverty in the community, WRMS had students with attendance difficulties that resulted in truancy cases. Additionally, when a student had behavioral and academic difficulty in school, parents transferred their child to another school or to the virtual school in South Carolina for homeschooling. Therefore, the SWPBIS had difficulty with sustainability as the student population fluctuated.

The fundamental goal in placing students in an inclusion classroom at WRMS was to provide students with learning disabilities a mainstream education instead of segregating them into self-contained classrooms. Many students performed below the eighth-grade level, segregating them from assignment to other English classes with the majority of students performing on grade level. Like the race segregation of Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and African Americans in the common schools, students in the inclusion classroom faced social separation due to their assignment to the class. Spring (2014) argued that the minority races in the United States were segregated educationally to accept subordinate roles in society. The concern was whether the current educational system and practices at WRMS segregated students with learning disabilities and behavioral difficulties into subordinate roles in the twenty-first century.

Implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©*. To address the differences of students with learning disabilities and help their peers understand them better, the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* (*OBPP*) funded by the school district was incorporated in classroom instruction. The program provided a "comprehensive approach that included schoolwide, classroom, individual, and community components" (OBPP, 2017, www.clemson.edu/olweus). The *OBPP* (2017) focused on long-term

change to create a school climate that is safe and positive. The *OBPP* (2017) stated, "The program's goals are to reduce and prevent bullying problems among schoolchildren and to improve peer relations at school" (para. 2). The program stated that it "has been found to reduce bullying among children, improve the social climate of classrooms, and reduce related antisocial behaviors, such as vandalism and truancy" (OBPP, 2017, para. 2). The focus of the program was to change the school climate and classroom environment to provide children with the right to be educated in a safe school community.

The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* originated with Dan Olweus as a professor of psychology at the University of Bergen in Bergen, Norway and affiliated with the Research Center for Health Promotion. The program started as a large-scale bullying project in 1970 and in the 1980's, Dan Olweus conducted a systematic intervention study on bullying internationally. This resulted in his creation of the original "Bullying Prevention Program" (OBPP, 2017, www.clemson.edu/olweus). Due to his research and efforts to eliminate the negative impact of bullying in schools, Olweus received numerous awards, including the Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology Award in 2011 and the Distinguished Contributions to Research in Public Policy in 2012 given by the American Psychological Association (APA) (OBPP, 2017, www.clemson.edu/olweus). Olweus and Ekblad (1986) conducted Olweus' Aggression Inventory to assess if there were differences in aggression and behavior of Chinese primary students to Western European children. Their findings resulted in differences, showing that the Chinese students tended to control their aggression and behavioral tendencies. Olweus (2007) implemented his research in a selection cohorts design that categorizes student groups into age cohorts. He determined

that three data points should be taken over a course of 20 months for students in grades 5 through 8 to determine the implications of a bullying prevention program. In his hypothesis, he projected that the implementation of a bullying prevention program will show a decrease in bullying behaviors two years after intervention. After implementation in two separate programs, Olweus (2007) showed that the bullying prevention program resulted in a decrease of bullying behavior after two years.

The following studies on the appropriate implementations of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* were discussed in detail in the Literature Review. Black and Jackson (2007) implemented the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* to determine if it was effective for urban youth in the United States. Their findings indicated that the program decreased their incident density by 65 percent over a course of four years (Black and Jackson). Hong (2009) also addressed the use of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* for students in low-income schools and whether it proved effective and an appropriate intervention. He determined that urban inner-city schools tend to have student violence, teachers less willing to address bullying issues, administrators who fail to engage students, and home environments that increase violence in the students' lives, and concluded the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* takes a whole-school approach, that it is an appropriate intervention for low-income schools with high incidents of bullying in the schools. Black et. al. (2010) applied the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* to a large urban district with obstacles to implementation. They found that funding over the course of a few years impacted the program, and determined without multi-year funding the program would not be successful and with multi-year funding,

they were able to provide community support, which proved the bullying prevention program to be successful.

Purpose Statement

The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©*, funded by the school district and approved by the administration of White Rose Middle School, was incorporated in classroom instruction. The goal of the action research was to help all students in the inclusion classroom to better understand each other's differences to decrease incidents of bullying in the classroom. Implementing the *OBPP©* in the inclusion classroom investigated the impact of the program on behavior for students within the classroom.

Secondary students with individualized education plans (IEPs) received accommodations to their learning for use in the regular education classroom. Accommodations included extended time for testing and behavioral accommodations to help a student meet goals towards positive behavior in the school. There were also students with severe emotional and behavioral disorders who receive 504 Plans and behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) to help them meet social and emotional goals through the year. When a student with an IEP or BIP disrupts the classroom, he or she was expected to conform to the structure of the controlled classroom, as did their peers without learning disabilities, to maintain a healthy learning environment for all students. If disruptive students failed to meet the behavioral expectations, the school guidelines stated that they should be sent to an administrator or to behavioral intervention (BI), which was the school's in-school suspension room. The issue of concern at White Rose Middle School focused on the expectations for students with IEPs and BIPs to immediately process and transition into new classroom procedures and expectations

while facing their own personal challenges and disabilities. According to Ingram, Lewis-Palmer, and Sugai (2005), while "time-out is an effective punishment procedure" for some students, for other students it is ineffective due to their behaviors "being maintained by escape" (p. 225). This problem was evident in students with IEPs and BIPs at White Rose Middle, since teachers stated that students who find the material difficult tended to request to go to ISS or pushed the limits of the classroom rules to receive ISS, which took them out of the classroom and separated them from the work expected of them.

Problem of Practice

WRMS incorporated a School-wide Positive Based Intervention System (PBIS), where coins were given out for positive behavior to reinforce and influence students to behave and interact in positive ways. While some students had an interest in receiving coins for positive behavior, many of the students with negative classroom behaviors targeted and harassed the students earning coins. During the 2016/2017 school year at WRMS, the inclusion classroom had a rise in incidents before the School-wide PBIS program was introduced in November of that school year. Minor incidents included classroom disruptions and cell phone violations, while incidents that required In School Suspension included profanity, racial slurs, continued class disruptions, disrespect, physical violence, and bullying behavior towards other students. After the School-wide PBIS was introduced, inclusion students continued with disruptive behavior, defiant behavior, physical aggression, and disrespect towards the instructor and other students. The decrease in behavioral incidents in February 2017, were due to changes in two students being removed from the class to receive different accommodations in the school, but then the behavior incidents rose again in March 2017 and continued to rise as the end

of the school year approached. The rise in negative behavior after the School-wide PBIS model was implemented, indicates that it is ineffective for inclusion students at WRMS. Previous implementations of behavioral interventions also proved ineffective in improving student behavior.
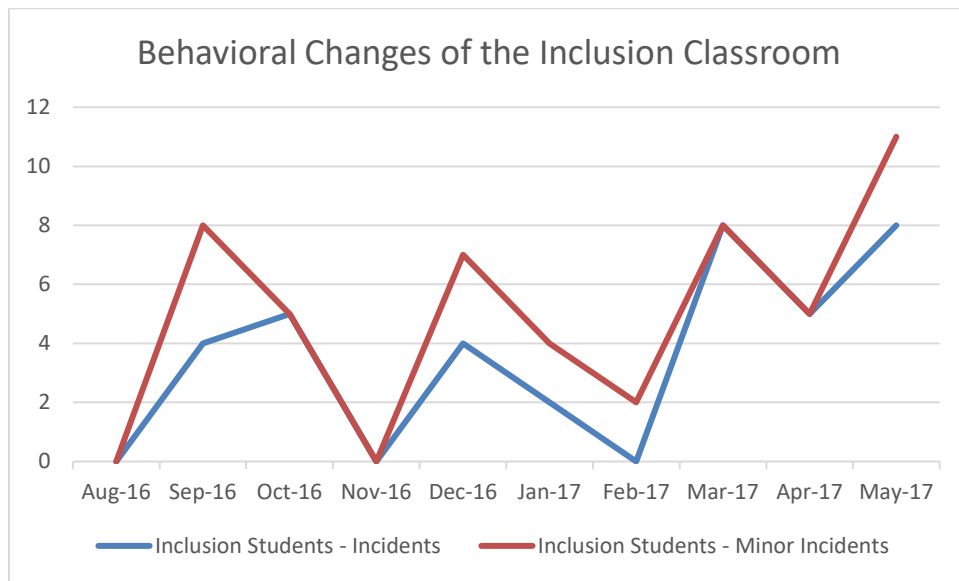
Figure 1.1. Behavioral Changes of the Inclusion Classroom

These student interactions led to conflicts that they have not previously been taught how to navigate to resolve. The conflicts frequently led to physical aggression, a lack of empathy, and verbal abuse. The behaviors between students were brought into the classroom, which negatively impacted the learning environment. In the inclusion classroom, these behaviors and peer interactions were compounded by the population of students identified as having a "learning disability." These students had difficulties with self-regulation, which resulted in them being impulsive in the classroom with both the lesson and their peers. they had difficulty in understanding empathy, so tended to not show empathy to their classmates. They communicated with each other as if they were on social media, which impacted their ability to understand that their harsh reactions to

each other could result in peers perceiving that they are not accepted or liked by the classroom community. The researcher identified these behaviors and reactions as disruptions that led to further conflict and future bullying behaviors.

Due to a continued reactionary approach to disruptive behavior in the classroom and the proactive approach of PBIS failing in the school, the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* was incorporated to determine if it had a positive effect on student behavior. The present action research study had the general education teacher implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Plan©* to attempt to decrease the incidences of negative behaviors within the inclusion classroom. The action researcher applied the method of a pretest-posttest, pre-and post-observations, pre- and post-questionnaire, and the implementation of the *OBPP©* intervention to show the program's impact on behavior in the inclusion classroom.

Research Questions

The present action research study focused on the issues surrounding implementation of a behavior-modification model called the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (OBPP)© on middle-level students in an inclusion classroom. These students were identified by the school district as "learning disabled" and are documented in the school as having behavior problems in the traditional classroom structure; therefore, the research question is as follows:

RQ1: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled?"

The secondary research questions are as follows:

SRQ1: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on the knowledge about bullying of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"?

SRQ2: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on the bullying behavior of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"?

SRQ3: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on the perception of the school bullying of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"?

SRQ4: How do middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled" react to the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©*?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this action research study was based upon the ideas of experience in progressivism and social reform in social reconstructionism. The progressivist theory, specifically John Dewey's (1938) *Experience in Education* and (1910) *Democracy and Education,* and the historical impact on education during the Essentialist movement directly affects special education. The discrimination of special education within educational reform that stratified racial and social classes and the impact of the Civil Rights movement on education will be further discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

Freire, Dewey, and experience in the inclusion classroom. Paulo Freire (1970) stated, "There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world" (Flinders & Thorton, 2013, p. 157). The roles of teachers

are to guide their students toward this ability to speak a "true word," not as telling the truth but towards the action of changing their world. Freire's argument directly relates to the teaching practices of the OBPP, which instructs the teacher to act as a moderator by asking students questions about bullying issues they see in their schools and helping to guide them toward a conclusion on what they can do positively to change their world through love humility, and faith in their students through dialoguing about bullying prevention. The OBPP places the teacher in the position of moderator and the students in position of communicating with each other about their experiences and must be willing to take action towards the improvement of their experiences in both the classroom and the school to succeed.

An improvement in experience between students by working towards alleviating bullying incidents in the school, should improve their experiences in education. Dewey (1938) stated, "Every experience lives on in further experiences. Hence the central problem of an education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (pp.27-28). The OBPP focuses on the students' experiences, without focusing on how it improves classroom instruction and classroom management. In the inclusion classroom, growth is measured in multiple ways, due to the needs of the students' IEPs and BiPs; yet, one of the constant issues in the classroom at WRMS is the previous external experiences the students have had before entering the school building. Dewey (1938) stated that the principle of continuity can work in varying ways, either negatively when the experience "renders [a child] averse to and comparatively incompetent in situations which require effort and perseverance in overcoming obstacles" (p.37), or positively when "an

16

experience arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense to carry a person over dead places in the future" (p.38). WRMS is at a 74% poverty rate; therefore, students in the inclusion classroom not only deal with issues of poverty, but also issues of disability, which impacts their motivation and perspective toward their educational capabilities. The incorporation of the OBPP in the inclusion classroom instruction should promote the environment necessary to help these students experience positive dialogue and communication with their peers and their teachers.

Progressivism. Progressivist theory aims at promoting a democratic society in schools in order to help children become actively engaged in their learning. The instruction needs to be relevant and the teachers serve as guides to help students through inquiry processes. John Dewey addressed curriculum that incorporated student interest into education. Dewey (1897) stated that "true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself" (p.77-80). Dewey (1897) determined that the experience of the child and the education of the child should revolve around his social situation, that you could not separate the child from the experiences he brings from home and society, and that teachers should use the experiences of the child to make his learning relevant to his interests in order to help him become an agent for change.

Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism involves a curriculum that incorporates diverse curriculum to promote social and societal change. It focuses on teaching students to critically think about their studies and to attempt to understand the marginalized groups within society. Additionally, multicultural education involves critical theory to

make learning relevant. Counts (1932) believed that education and the curriculum that teachers choose will "influence the social attitudes, ideals, and behavior of the coming generation" (p.26). Through critical theory and a multicultural curriculum, teachers return to Progressivist ideals that ground education in experience and relevance to promote change in society. The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© lessons addressed the marginalized students in WRMS who are bullied or excluded by their peers. The lessons taught students about empathy, standing up to bullying in their school, and to include those students who are left out. Through this, students learned how to identify and report bullying in their environment to promote social change through the Olweus curriculum.

Action Research Methodology

In this action research methodology, the researcher's role will be discussed to address her positionality as both a researcher and a participant. Second, the site and participants are introduced to frame the community of school and community that the research takes place in. Finally, the procedures that the data was collected are discussed to show the mixed methods incorporated in the study.

Researcher Role. The researcher's role in the action research study was as the inclusion classroom teacher for eighth grade English Language Arts. In the role of teacher and researcher, she served as an active participant in the concurrent mixed methods design (Coe et al., 2017). The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© lessons were taught by the researcher as an active participant guiding her students through discussions on bullying prevention. The role of participant provided the researcher with a full knowledge of the needs of her students and what they directly experienced in the school and the classroom. The students were measured through a one-group pretest-

posttest design. For this collection of data, the researcher collected quantitative data through a bullying knowledge pre- and posttest, a pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior, and the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire as a pre- and post-questionnaire on the perceptions of bullying. The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* classroom lessons served as the intervention, in which the researcher created transcripts from the audio-recorded student responses. The researcher also kept an audit trail of her observations from the classroom lessons, which placed her in the position of being both an insider as she participated and an outsider as she reflected on her interactions with the students. In the data collection role, the researcher was able to analyze the data outside of the classroom to reflect on her findings. This analysis placed the researcher in the position of looking at the student data objectively to determine the impact of the intervention on students identified with a learning disability.

Site. The research was conducted in an Eighth-grade English Language Arts inclusion classroom at White Rose Middle School. The school was in the Piedmont area of South Carolina. The school had a population of 761 students, 61 teachers, and served the seventh and eighth grade (SC AYP, 2016). It was the only middle school that instructed seventh and eighth grades. The school had a technology emphasis, where it provided each faculty member with an iPad and each core instructional team with an iPad or Chrome Cart for students to use in the classroom (SC AYP, 2016). The school provided extra time and extra help through homeroom time and an afterschool tutoring program. It was a partner with the local Relay for Life organization through the American Cancer Society (SC AYP, 2016).

Seventeen students qualified for South Carolina Junior Scholars and inducted twenty students in the National Junior Honor Society (SC AYP, 2016). The eighth grade girls' basketball team won a local division championship, the girls' softball team claimed the local championship, the middle school chorus was named grand champions of the Time to Travel Music Festival, and the band named five students to the SCBDA Honor Band (SC AYP, 2016). There were twenty-five perfect scores on the Algebra I End-of-Course exam and twenty-five perfect scores on the English I End-of-Course Exam for Spring 2015 (SC AYP, 2016). The school hosted a vehicle career fair, a job shadowing day, a college door decorating contest, astronomy night, art exhibit, and a STEM inventor's fair (SC AYP, 2016).

Participants. Historically, inclusion classrooms in both English Language Arts and Trans-Algebra were populated by 45%-55% special education students. The special education students' learning disabilities were documented through Individualized Education Plans (IEP), Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIP), and 504 Plans. In addition to this population, the inclusion classroom was also populated with English language learners (ELL) that may also have an IEP or BIP. Frequently, students with IEPs who have Emotional Disturbance (ED) or receive frequent disciplinary actions also had a BIP attached to their IEP. Historically, the demographics of the inclusion classroom at WRMS was between 19-22 students with the following identifying factors: 12-13 males at 59%-63%, 7-9 females at 37%-41%, 14-16 Caucasian students at 63%-84%, 2-4 African American students at 11%-18%, 1-4 Hispanic/ELL students at 5%-18%, and 8-9 students classified with IEP/BIP/504 Plan at 36%-47%. WRMS also classified 74% of its

student population to receive Free and Reduced Lunch, which placed the students in a school with high poverty rates.

Data collection methods. The action research study followed a concurrent mixed methods design (Coe et al., 2017). Quantitative data was collected through a one-group pretest-posttest design. The pretest and posttest consisted of an assessment to determine student understanding of bullying before and after the treatment. The researcher conducted a pre- and post-observation of student behavior to determine changes in student behavior and peer interaction. A pre- and post-questionnaire was given before and after the intervention of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© lessons to determine students' perceptions of the rates and types of bullying they were experiencing The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© classroom lessons were the treatment. Qualitative data was collected through lessons audio recorded that were later transcribed for analysis to determine what the student reactions to the program were.

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that students in the study would accurately respond to the Bullying Survey Questions in the pre- and post-questionnaire. The researcher also assumed that students in the study would be actively involved in discussing bullying incidents in the school during the classroom lessons. The researcher assumes that the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© will show an impact in the inclusion classroom beyond the School-wide PBIS program. Additionally, the researcher assumed that the administration of the school would provide her access to discipline and special education data on the students in the study.

Limitations

The limitations the researcher faced involved access to data and testing schedules in WRMS. The researcher was not a special education teacher, therefore the data she had access to as an English teacher only addressed her students. She was reliant on receiving IEPs from the special education teachers to know the goals of students with learning disabilities. The researcher did not have access to discipline data from the previous year and was reliant on the school administration to provide her with that data. The researcher also discovered that the school's daily schedule had changed for the implementation year, so scheduling the OBPP Classroom Lessons would need to be incorporated into classroom instruction instead of during the previous homeroom time. MAP testing in the English classroom and Benchmark testing also limited instructional time for the implementation, unless the OBPP classroom lessons could be incorporated into instructional activities that met South Carolina College and Career Readiness standards for eighth grade English.

Delimitations

This action research study took place at WRMS, with participants in the eighth grade English inclusion classroom that the researcher was assigned to. Only the students who signed and return the permission forms would be included in the study. The findings of the study represented the perspectives and documented behavior of these students in the two classrooms.

Conclusion

The problem of practice at WRMS addressed the overpopulation of students with learning disabilities and developing language skills in the inclusion classroom, which

resulted in an increase of behavioral disruptions and discipline. To address the problem of practice, the implementation of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* was discussed in comparison to the school wide PBIS program. A rationale for the study, purpose for the study, and methodology were discussed briefly and supported by the background of the problem of practice at WRMS. Additionally, conceptual and theoretical frameworks for the study were provided to situate the problem of practice in Dewey's progressivism as students experience social justice through the *OBPP©* classroom lessons.

The limitations and assumptions of the researcher and the problem of practice were discussed to foresee future difficulties with the study as it was conducted. Though there were some limitations, the goal of decreasing negative experiences with behavior in the inclusion classroom was beneficial to all the students, since the goal aimed at improving the classroom environment to increase the productive learning. Students in the inclusion classroom had the opportunity to excel within a positive environment, therefore the adoption of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* lessons into classroom instruction to create safe interactions between students were implemented at WRMS in hopes that students with learning disabilities gained the same educational rights to learn as students outside of the inclusion classroom, resulting in lower numbers of students with IEPs and BIPs to lose educational time in the classroom due to discipline referrals.

Chapter Two, the literature review for this action research study, addressed conceptual and historical research that grounded the study in theory and social justice. It also discussed current trends in behavioral implementations and school discipline for special education and ELL students in middle schools, while also addressing bullying and

approaches to eliminating bullying within schools. Chapter Three discussed the methodology used to plan the implementation of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©.* It discussed the data collection procedures and the measurements used to analyze the data collected during the research study. Chapter Four discussed the research study in detail, which included the results, data analysis, findings, a discussion on how the research should continue in the future, and the changes that needed to be made to improve the study. Chapter Five reflected on the researcher as a leader within the school. This chapter addressed the researcher's philosophy and personal values, her role in developing curriculum, and her reflection on the process of conducting the action research study.

Glossary of Key Terms

504 Plan – Students who qualify for services under Section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973 are entitled to receive individualized services that are included on a 504 Plan. (Speil & Evans 2014, p.453)

Ableism – The discrimination against someone based on perceived "ability" (Ferri and Connor 2005).

Behavioral Intervention Plans (BiP) – An intervention plan based on a child with a disability's disciplinary action that is put into place after an IEP team "conduct[s] a functional behavioral assessment, [or] unless the LEA had conducted a functional behavioral assessment before the behavior that resulted in the change of placement occurred" in order to implement modifications and strategies to help a student function socially and emotionally in appropriate ways (State Register 2011, p. 116).

Bullying – "Bullying is aggressive behavior marked by an imbalance of power occurring

    repetitively with intent to harm [1,2] and can be either physical (e.g., fighting,

    pushing) or relational (e.g., social exclusion, spreading rumors). Bullying is a

    social phenomenon, with each child's role— bully, victim, bully-victim, or

    bystander [1,3]— dependent on the situation" (Bauer et. al. 2006, p. 266).

Emotional and Behavior Disorders (EBD) – Students with ED or E/BD demonstrate

    problem behavior on a consistent basis that is much more severe, intense, and of

    longer duration. The inappropriate behaviors are chronic, significantly interfere

    with academic achievement, and inhibit their ability to establish and maintain

    appropriate social relationships across settings such as home, school, and

    community. (Evers and Spencer 2011, p. 38)

Emotional disturbance (ED) – A condition exhibiting one or more of the following

    characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely

    affects a child's educational performance: (A) An inability to learn that cannot be

    explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; (B) An inability to build or

    maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; (C)

    Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (D) A

    general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; [and] (E) A tendency to

    develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

    (State Registrar 2011, pp. 4-5)

Functional Behavior Assessment – Functional behavioral assessment (FBA) has been

    suggested for facilitating the development and effectiveness of behavior

    intervention plans. (Ingram et. al. 2005, p. 224)

Function-Based Intervention – The identification and development of function-based on individualized FBA information, paying particular attention to factors that maintained occurrences of problem behavior (function). Function-based intervention strategies emphasized ways to neutralize setting events, make antecedents irrelevant, reduce effectiveness of problem behavior by teaching new behaviors, and provide access to maintaining consequences for appropriate behavior while not allowing access to maintaining consequences for inappropriate behavior. (Ingram et. al. 2005, p. 227)

In School Suspension – A "disciplinary action that is administered as a consequence of a student's inappropriate behavior, requires that a student absent him/herself from the classroom or from the school for a specified period of time" (Costenbader and Markson 1998, p. 62; Smith et. al. 2012, p. 175).

Inclusion – Seeking to provide appropriate educational supports for diverse learners in the context of high standards, increasingly diverse classrooms and the demands and opportunities of what has come to be coined "21st century learning" and "empowering the classroom teacher with the knowledge, skills and supports to identify the authentic needs of students and to differentiate instruction to respond to those needs (Philpott, 2007; Howery et. al. 2013, p. 273).

Individualized Education Plans (IEP) – Individualized education program. Individualized education program or IEP means a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with Secs. 300.320 through 300.324. (State Registrar 2011, p. 11)

Learning Disability – (1) Intellectual disability means significantly subaverage general

    intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior

    and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's

    educational performance. (2) Specific learning disability means a disorder in one

    or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in

    using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability

    to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations,

    including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain

    dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (State Registrar 2011, p. 5)

Other – "A term used in feminist criticism (the "not male" and thus unimportant) and

    postcolonialism (the colonized) to mean "different from" and unimportant, that

    which is dominated" (Bressler, 2011, p. 320)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A literature review addresses previous research and theoretical perspectives of a problem to review what other researchers in the field have implemented that is similar (Leedy & Ormond, 2005). The benefits of a literature review offer new perspective to the research, inform a researcher about what others are conducting in the area, and show what methodologies others have used to address the problem. A literature review also reveals sources for data and measurement tools others have effectively developed, reveals problems and solutions found in the research, and helps with interpreting findings based on any previous research (Leedy & Ormond, 2005).

In this literature review, the researcher began her investigation through the University of South Carolina's online database with Boolean phrases that addressed bullying prevention in schools, discipline practices, and the behavior of students within special education. The databases used were *ERIC and ERIC ProQuest, Education Source, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Education Full Text, Academic Search Premier,* and *Dissertations and Theses.* The researcher extended her initial investigation into additional subjects that specifically addressed the study. The additional topics investigated were research on the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© (OBPP) and its implementations, special education and behavioral interventions in schools, and English language learners (ELL) students placed in special education. During the literature review the researcher began seeing trends and grouped the articles by subject, and then

identified the commonalities within each trend. The researcher also used texts that addressed historical patterns and developments in education, while also incorporating foundational texts from theorists in education.

This literature review focuses on the research surrounding bullying prevention, the development of special education discipline and intervention practices, and the impact of social justice issues in special education. The first section of this literature review addressed the theory surrounding educational experiences and bullying prevention education in the inclusion classroom. The second section addressed the implications of behavior interventions for students with learning disabilities. The third section addressed the history of inclusive and exclusive education in the United States. The fourth section discussed inequalities in education during the Civil rights movement and the development of individualized education plans (IEP) for students with learning disabilities. The fifth section addressed current trends in interventions for students with learning disabilities. The final section discussed the implementations of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© in schools with discipline and bullying incidents.

Background of the Problem of Practice at WRMS

At White Rose Middle School(WRMS) identified special education students drew the gaze of their fellow students in the inclusion classroom when they displayed negative behavior and interrupted the classroom environment, resulting in altercations, rumors, and teasing students at a disadvantage. The conflicts frequently led to physical aggression, a lack of empathy, and verbal abuse and led to bullying behaviors. In the inclusion classroom, these behaviors and peer interactions were compounded by the population of students identified as having a "learning disability," who had difficulties

with self-regulation and were impulsive in the classroom with both the lesson and their peers. For the present action research study, the participant researcher was a core English teacher with an inclusion classroom at WRMS, who was also responsible for providing special education services to students with documented learning disabilities. The identified problem of practice (PoP) for the present action research study has the general education teacher implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* to attempt to decrease the incidences of negative behaviors within the inclusion classroom.

Theoretical Base

The following research addressed Progressivism theory that connectd experience and education through Dewey's (1938) perception that education should provide learners with positive educational experiences "that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (pp. 27-28). Like Dewey, the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* uses the impact of experience to teach students how to recognize and prevent bullying in their environment. Therefore, the *OBPP©* incorporated progressivism as its foundation in its lessons and classroom discussions. Second, multicultural curriculum and social theory was discussed to address issues of desegregation and the ways school curriculum included and then eliminated relevant experiences for students of color. In the final section, behavior interventions for students with disabilities were suggested and discussed to determine the difficulties these students face in disciplinary practices in schools.

Progressivism theory. Progressivism aims to promote democratic social living that fosters self-learning through interdisciplinary instruction (Dewey 1938). The curriculum focuses on the students' interests and involves the students applying human,

social, and global problems in their learning. While students apply their experiences to their learning, the teacher serves as a facilitator to their inquiry learning. Freire (1970) believed teachers could guide their students to change the world around them through dialogue and interaction, and Dewey (1938) believed that students' experiences both in school and outside of school impacted their education. The focus on dialogue and students' experiences laid the foundation for progressivism education.

Paulo Freire (1970) stated, "There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world" (as cited in Flinders & Thorton, 2013, p. 157). The teaching practices of the *OBPP©* helps teachers act as moderators for their students so they can gain the ability to speak their "true word" to help them change their world. Freire incorporated the act of dialogue as the culminating path toward speaking the true word. He determined that people who have been denied their right to voice their truth must reclaim it to prevent dehumanizing aggression in their environment (Freire 1970). Freire determined that dialogue cannot occur without the following: "a profound love for the world and for men," "humility," and "an intense faith in man" (as cited in Flinders & Thorton, 2013, p. 158). Through dialogue, teachers guide their students and must demonstrate Freire's three aspects of love, humility, and faith in their students. The *OBPP©* lessons help the teacher lead her students through topics with each other that address their experiences, which through dialogue helps her students prevent acts of bullying aggression in the environment.

To be able to question the world around them and to become the knower, students must understand the rules in their classroom society to maintain order. Dewey (1938) stated that "Children at recess or after school play games…. [that] the games involve

31

rules, and these rules order their conduct" (p. 52). Like the games children play, the classroom also needs rules of order for learning to occur. He determined that when an adult changed the rules of their game, the children modeled the change in their own games. This modeling is a part of classroom instruction, in which the teacher models what the students are expected to perform before assigning the activity. Dewey (1938) concluded that an individual's actions can impact the environment for the group they are interacting within. Dewey (1938) stated the following:

> There are likely to be some who, when they come to school, are already victims of injurious conditions outside of the school and who have become so passive and unduly docile that they fail to contribute. There will be others who, because of previous experience, are bumptious and unruly and perhaps downright rebellious. But it is certain that the general principle of social control cannot be predicted upon such cases. It is also true that no general rule can be laid down for dealing with such cases. The teacher has to deal with them individually. (p. 56)

Dewey (1938) suggested, the unruly students should be excluded to prevent them from impeding the education of others.

The inclusion classroom at WRMS incorporated co-operative groups, pairs, and whole group learning, resulting in a classroom society expected to learn through experience together. Yet, when there were students with severe behavioral disabilities, students who participated in fighting in the school, and students who functioned below their grade level due to learning disabilities, the classroom society and established rules were challenged. The classroom environment suffered, and instruction was delayed, which negatively impacted the students and the curriculum they needed to learn before

they leave the eighth grade. In turn, this adversely impacted the Special Education teacher and the general education teacher through standardized test scores. This resulted in unfavorable experiences for both the students and instructors in the inclusion classroom as they were impacted by students presenting with disruptive behaviors.

Positive experiences between students works towards alleviating bullying incidents in the school. Dewey (1938) stated that experience that is well planned proves valuable in education and promotes continued learning. The *OBPP©* focused on the students' experiences school-wide, in the classroom, and in the community. Dewey (1938) determined that the negative experiences students have impact a principle of continuity, which can be influenced by both the negative and positive experiences. Students in the inclusion classroom dealt with issues of poverty alongside their disabilities, impacting their motivation to learn. Implementing the *OBPP©* in the inclusion classroom provided the environment necessary to help these students experience positive dialogue and communication with their peers and their teachers.

Multicultural curriculum and social theory. Multiculturalism involves a curriculum that challenges the Eurocentric canon to include pluralism, diversity, multiplicity with the aim to empower students to investigate the human condition from a global and social perspective (Counts 1932). It focused on teaching students to reflect and attempt to understand the experiences of historically marginalized groups, including women, people of color, and people with disabilities. The students are challenged to dialogue across differences while instructors create curriculum that challenges the ideas of cultures. The *OBPP©* helped students engage in dialogue that allowed them to reflect on the world around them, attempted to understand their environment from each other's

perspectives, and helped them develop tolerance and understanding for the diverse population of students in the inclusion classroom.

Christine Sleeter and Jeremy Stillman (2005) argued that the focus of the English Language Arts (ELA) classroom shifted from a multicultural focus to standards focus in the 1980s. Multicultural education provided students with positive experiences that were relevant to their lives and culture. They claimed that during desegregation, the community of color believed that the curriculum failed to represent the student population, which created negative educational experiences for students. Sleeter and Stillman (2005) stated, "Historically disenfranchised communities argued that textbooks and other sources of curriculum were too often culturally irrelevant to students of color, and inaccessible to students of non-English language backgrounds" (p. 255).

Yet in the 1980s, the curriculum of schools began shifting due to the belief that multicultural education failed to instill in students a strong work ethic and failed to meet intellectual challenges in school (*A Nation at Risk,* 1983). The National Commission on Eduction (1983) determined that American students needed to be able to compete globally in science and technology, therefore, decided that school standards needed to be strengthened to meet those needs. Standardized testing was the answer to insuring that schools met the movement toward curriculum reform for the welfare of American students, which continued to increase in its impact for accountability in education. The *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) mandated that annual testing in reading and math must be implemented to hold states receiving federal funding accountable. Therefore, curriculum became a science focused on collecting data to prove the school, teachers, and

students were meeting growth scores based on an end-of-year test, eliminating the esteem-building curriculum found in multicultural education.

Although the curriculum focused on science, math, and technology, English Language Arts instructors continued to stress the need for a multicultural education for students to understand the world around them, so they can promote social and political change. Fairbrother (2003) determined that the stress on science and technology curriculum failed to provide students with an education the promotes equality. She believed that through a discourse in critical theory, English teachers can return the focus on multicultural education to promote racial, gender, and social equality through critically studying literature to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural influences impacting the world (Fairbrother 2003). Page (2004) also promoted a multicultural education in the English Language Arts classroom. She believed that there is an achievement gap between students of color and their Caucasian peers, and determined that a lack in a multicultural education is the culprit (Page 2004). To close the gap, she determined that not only can educators provide culturally relevant curriculum, but they can also change their instruction to become a critical, multicultural educator (Page 2004).

Behavior interventions for students with disabilities. Weigle (1997) discussed the implications of changing the classroom setting to the inclusion model. She determined that both general education teachers and special education teachers lack the skills to manage a classroom of students with disruptive behaviors. Weigle (1997) argued that schools would need to be reformed in order for the inclusion model to be effective and would need to incorporate positive behavior support (PBS) for teachers and administrators to eliminate the use of punitive interventions that reinforce negative

behavior. While the PBS model was initially created to serve students with severe disabilities, the students seen in inclusion classrooms, teachers are found to not receive the training necessary to provide appropriate discipline for these students (Landers et. al 2012). Instead, the training teachers typically received involve a focus on providing support for all students at the foundational Tier 1 and specific interventions students with disabilities at Tier 3 (Landers et. al 2012). Tier 3 interventions removed students from instructional time, which led to a detriment in their learning, resulting in student frustration and teacher ineffectiveness.

Evans and Weiss (2014) suggested ways in which positive behavior support can effectively occur in the inclusion classroom. They determined that special education and general education teachers need common planning times to discuss the challenges and needs of their students with learning disabilities (Evans & Weiss, 2014). That time can be before and after school, having a common planning time, and brief messages over email or in mailboxes. Evans and Weiss (2014) place the role of interventionist as the responsibility of the special educator, the person who needs to design creative ways to help students in the inclusion classroom succeed both educationally and behaviorally. Yet, in the creation of many schools' PBIS programs, they fail to utilize the skills that special educators have been trained in to create effective interventions and rewards for students with disabilities (Schuster et. al 2017). Due to this, the instructional models of PBIS provided by the school for all students fail to accommodate the instruction, fail to make the rewards applicable for students with disabilities, and fail to have interventions that can be fairly applied to the special education population (Schuster et. al 2017). The PBIS model implemented at WRMS required teachers to reinforce positive behavior

while still maintaining the hierarchal model of interventions, without built-in instructional accommodations, applicable rewards, and interventions that addressed the needs of students with learning disabilities, causing the system to be counterintuitive for the special education population.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS)

The second section addressed the incorporation of a school-wide positive behavior and intervention support (SWPBIS) for students and the ineffective impact of the program on behavior for students with disabilities. This section discussed the high rates of office referrals for students with disabilities, appropriate interventions for students with learning disabilities, the impact of a SWPBIS plan for students with learning disabilities. The research then focused on disciplining students in the special education population. The research continued the issue of classroom behavior and disruption within the inclusion classroom, as Dewey's (1938) theory of experience and education illustrated the problem with social control that students' internal experiences negatively impact the behavior and experiences in school. This section addressed the difficulties with disruptive behaviors negatively impacting the inclusion classroom. Finally, the section concluded with how White Rose Middle School implemented discipline through a SWPBIS.

Incorporation of SWPBIS in the inclusion classroom. Intervention plans implemented in schools involve tiered systems that address the foundational rewards system that then focus in on coaching and educating students of specific disciplinary and behavioral needs. In positive behavioral supports (PBS) and positive behavioral intervention supports (PBIS), Tier 1 establishes behavioral expectations, Tier 2 delivers

group interventions and education, and Tier 3 focuses on specific interventions for the individual student (Schuster et. al 2017; PBIS.org 2017). Response to interventions also incorporates a multi-tiered system that provides high-quality and scientifically based classroom instruction, ongoing student assessment, differentiation, and parent involvement (RtI Network 2017). RtI incorporated three tiers: the first provided classroom instruction with group interventions, the second targeted interventions for students not making progress in the classroom, and the third provided individualized interventions that targets skill deficits (RtI Network 2017). The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© provided behavioral interventions to address classroom and school behavior that impacts the classroom environment and student learning (Olweus 2017).

Colcord, Mathur, and Zucker (2016) developed a school-wide positive behavior support intervention plan for an urban school with high rates of office disciplinary referrals (ODRs). Their school-wide positive behavior support plan, based on student office referral data, provided clear expectations across the school, taught the expectations to the students, and provided professional development support for staff to help in teaching and monitoring behavior reinforcement in the school. Colcord et al. (2016) implemented their plan at an elementary school and hosted rallies and events to gain parent involvement and support. They categorized the office disciplinary referrals as either aggressive or nonaggressive, taking measurements before the implementation and after two years of the implementation. Colcord et al. (2016) found that ODRs for all students with aggressive behaviors decreased by 50%, and the nonaggressive behaviors decreased by 57%. When they took a closer look, Colcord et al. (2016) found that students with disabilities were receiving a higher rate of referrals compared to their peers

without disabilities, where these students received ODRs at 78% overall and only decreased referrals to 70% after the intervention. They determined, from the minimal impact of the intervention, that students with disabilities need a more targeted and personalized support for learning expectations, resulting in the creation of social skills training and check-in/check-out procedures.

Farmer, Sutherland, Talbott, Brooks, Norwalk, and Huneke (2016) addressed the special needs of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) in the general education classroom. They determined that tiered approach interventions, like response to intervention (RtI) and school-wide positive behavior intervention support (SWPBIS) are effective for the general population of students, but fail to address the specific intervention needs of EBD students. Farmer et. al (2016) used the concept of dynamic systems theory (DST), which is a "system of elements that change over time" (Smith & Thelen 1993, p. 258). Farmer et al. (2016) suggested that a dynamic systems theory (DST) would be a more appropriate approach to intervention for EBD students, in which it works across four concepts of development that impact the experience of the student: correlated constraints, social synchrony, behavior as a developmental catalyst, and systems reorganization. The correlated constraints represented the world EBD students function in and the factors that impact their behavior based on their experiences in the environment and the interactions between students, the developmental catalyst relates to the alignment of school expectations with the implementation of a behavioral intervention system, and the systems reorganization addresses the adjustment of expected trajectories of behaviors for individual students and adaptation of behavior interventions in school (Farmer et al. 2016). The alignment of school expectations and the adjustment

of behavioral expectations were supported by the school environment, which strengthened the implementation of targeted and individualized interventions for students who have emotional and behavioral disorders and learning disabilities.

The team community building focus of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* provided students in the inclusion classroom with the tools to support each other through creating definitions and rules for bullying and adding to the rules with each lesson and Socrative discussion on their experiences in the world around them. These systems interacted with each other where the placement of students in the classroom and their peer group impacts their environment, while the previous experiences from another setting can spill over and impact a new setting. The students with emotional and behavioral disorders needed the chance to gain understanding by making connections between the dynamic systems framework that impacts their environment.

SWPBS and students with disabilities. McCurdy, Thomas, Truckenmiller, Rich, Hillis-Clark, and Lopez (2016) investigated the impact of a school-wide positive behavior intervention support program at an alternative school specifically for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Like general education schools, the school incorporated the three-tiered continuum of support to include targeting and intensifying interventions for students not responding to tier one. The intensified interventions included:

(a) establishing specific, annual, setting-wide goals, or benchmarks

(b) collecting and reporting data on behavioral incidents, points earned on a token economy, and progress on individual behavioral goals

(c) more frequent teaching of lesson plans on behavioral expectations

(d) adopting a universal, evidence-based social skills curriculum

(e) training staff in the effective use of behavioral procedures, including

behavior-specific, contingent praise. (McCurdy et al., 2016, p. 377)

The population of students in the study consisted of ones who had been referred to the

self-contained school for behavioral concerns unable to be addressed in the normal school

setting. The self-contained school served students from elementary to high school. They

used measures of fidelity through a team implementation checklist, and measures of

impact through a school-wide evaluation tool of discipline referrals. They had the teams

adopt methods of teaching expectations, responding to appropriate and inappropriate

behaviors, and systems of practices to support the SWPBIS program. After the

implementation of Tier 1, they analyzed the collected data and they concluded that

SWPBIS for students with EBD has limitations and that an improvement to behavior did

not occur. One reason that their study proved difficult was due to the population of the

students changing month to month, therefore they were unable to track the impact of

SWPBIS over an extended period. At WRMS, students with EBD and other behavior

problems were sent to the alternative school in the district when they were involved in

fights, bullying, and frequent classroom disruptions that resulted in In-school and Out-of-

school suspensions. The removal of students from the classroom improved behavior, but

when a student returned to the school setting after being at the alternative school and does

not receive specific instruction of the SWPBIS program or behavioral support during

their immersion into the classroom setting, the behavior and disruptions continued and

impacted the learning environment.

Jeffrey, McCurdy, Ewing, and Polis (2009) evaluated the use of a SWPBIS program and its effects of EBD students. They determined that teachers were not trained effectively to provide PBIS to students with EBD and disabilities. The EBD student needs teachers to practice instruction on behavioral expectations with reminders posted, praise and rewards, giving students the chance to respond, providing clear instruction, responding with positive behavior support, and corrective consequences (Jeffrey et. al 2009). Since teachers fail to receive opportunities for professional development to develop these skills, Jeffrey et. al (2009) conducted a pilot study involving both elementary and middle school teachers that would provide them with an integrity tool to address and observe behavior for the EBD students in the classroom. After three observation periods, they found that the classroom environment and the student on-task behavior after using the integrity tool proved statistically significant. Jeffery et. al (2009) suggested that teachers need more training to be able to implement positive behavioral practices for students with EBD, and that middle school teachers need further coaching after the strategies implemented become less effective.

Schelling and Harris (2016) found that the original Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) system was designed for addressing behavioral needs of students with severe disabilities. Yet, with recent implementations in K-12 schools, the PBIS systems focus on all students, which results in students with disabilities expected to have the same needs as regular education students. In their study, Schelling and Harris (2016) investigated the implementation differences of PBIS in an alternative school setting that served students with severe disabilities. They found that these alternative settings frequently did not incorporate a 3-Tiered approach like typical schools, and that modifications were made to

42

meet the needs of the individual learner (Schelling and Harris 2016). They used a convenience sampling at center-based schools that instructed students with severe disabilities, and used a survey to collect qualitative and quantitative data to determine the differences in how the schools implemented PBIS. Schelling and Harris (2016) found that the schools modified their practices to align with students' needs, conducted frequent assessment to track student behavior, and needed to work on improving parent contact. They also discovered a weakness in the implementation of PBIS to students with disabilities, where the data findings indicated students with high levels of behavioral difficulties did not respond as well to the Tier 1 instruction (Schelling & Harris 2016). Schelling and Harris (2016) discovering that PBIS fails to impact students with disabilities at the Tier 1 level supports the difficulties that WRMS faces with increased behavioral difficulties from students who exhibit EBD and disabilities over time. Students with learning disabilities at WRMS, who were placed in the inclusion classroom, failed to show improved behavior with PBIS as the singular intervention available. Therefore, they needed an additional intervention to modify and reinforce appropriate behavior in the school setting.

Discipline of students in special education. McElderry and Cheng (2014) studied the relationship between race, gender, and disability to school exclusion practices. By investigating data from the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey, they pulled their sample group from seventh to twelfth grade students. They measured the sample for school exclusion, the characteristics of the students, the characteristics of the students' mothers, and parental participation. They argued that boys have a higher rate of exclusionary discipline no matter their race or if they have a disability. They also

43

determined that boys and racial minority students were represented in special education at a higher rate than other students. Additionally, McElderry and Cheng (2014) stated that poverty, previous suspensions, and the last infraction determined whether a student received out of school suspension. They hypothesized that school exclusion would be associated with gender, race, disability, and socioeconomic status. McElderry and Cheng (2014) concluded that there was a positive correlation of an increase in school exclusionary practices for students who were "male, lower SES, ethnic minority, and in special education," and determined that "students who [were] most in need of supportive educational environment [were] more likely to be pushed out of school through bias exclusionary practices" (p. 247).

Williams, Pazey, Fall, Yates, and Roberts (2015) investigated the connections between administrators' exclusionary discipline practices with student with disabilities and their perceived threat. The participants in the study were secondary school administrators, whom they collected data on the topics of threat perception and disciplinary procedures the participants used. They used a survey to determine threat perception and analyzed the data with the test statistics of chi-square (χ^2), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) to evaluate the fit of the target model to the evaluation. Though students with disabilities represent 11-14 percent of the school population, 20-24 percent of the exclusionary discipline was given to students with disabilities, showing a disproportionate representation of suspensions to population. Williams et al. (2015) determined that exclusionary discipline was ineffective and did not reduce the negative behavior. Additionally, they found that exclusion negatively correlates with academic

achievement due to the students missing instructional time, which widens the gap of learning, resulting in necessary legal steps to be taken for students with documented disabilities. When these events occur, individualized education plan (IEP) teams must conduct manifestation determination reviews to decide if the behavior was a direct result of the student's disability to meet guidelines for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (Williams et al., 2015). They determined that students with disabilities were perceived as a threat to administrators and the school community, resulting in a relationship to the administrator's disciplinary procedures (Williams et al., 2015). Therefore, this perception led to a disproportionate use of exclusion practices for students with disabilities, even though the administrators believed that they were acting in the best interest of the child and school. Williams et al. (2015) suggested that administrators go through a process of recategorization of the students into inclusive settings, reflect upon their own practices to prevent from discriminating against students with disabilities.

Porowski, O'Connor, and Passa (2014), determined that special education students received out-of-school suspensions (OSS) at a higher rate than students not identified with a disability. Their study focused on the exclusionary discipline rates, suspension and expulsion, between students of color in comparison with their Caucasian peers, as well as exclusionary discipline rates for students in special education to determine if there was a disparity. They found that 75% of students in the special education population had received at least one suspension by twelfth grade, while only 55 percent of students without disabilities had received a suspension. Like Williams et al. (2015), Porowski et al. (2014) discovered that the percentage of exclusionary discipline

for students with disabilities (20 percent) was twice their percentage of the population (11 percent). Porowski et al. (2014) discovered that "students in special education received longer out-of-school suspensions than other students for some behaviors (such as hitting a teacher or committing a felony) and less severe punishments for other behaviors (such as bringing weapons to school or fighting)" (p. 4). They also determined that students with categories of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or Emotional and Behavioral disorders tended to receive higher incidents of suspension over students with other types of disabilities. After implementation of their study, Porowski et al. (2014) found that there was a decline in suspension rates for students with disabilities, but that the rates were still higher than those for other student groups. They also found that students with visual impairments received longer removal times than other groups of students with disabilities, which they could not draw a conclusion for.

Historical Context

This section illustrated the development of the educational system in the United States as it relates to students labeled with learning disabilities and their placement in special populations. The first historical section addressed research on immigrant and racial segregation in early schools. This research mirrored current inclusion education practices at WRMS as the students assigned to inclusion frequently remained in lower level English classes when promoted to the area high school. The second section of research readdressed, from the historical perspective, the impact of intelligence testing and its role of stratifying society into social classes and how these practices continue to impact and separate students with learning disabilities. This section also addressed the

placement of English language learners in the inclusion classroom and the difficulties of an inappropriate placement.

In the twentieth century, Chicago schools began investigating the differences of students through different assessments under the supervision of administrators who followed progressive education and the teachings of Dewey. According to Ryan (2011), Chicago schools faced an increase of student population from immigrant parents which put a strain on the schools. To address students' diverse needs, the Chicago schools "develop[ed] separate or 'special' classrooms for students considered 'subnormal' or 'backward'" (Ryan, 2011, p. 344). While students are no longer labeled as "subnormal" or "backward," student records include documentation which describes their intellectual abilities, medical disabilities, and behavioral disruptions. Ryan (2011) argued that the medical evaluations on these students connected their nationalities to their intellectual capacities, a belief in eugenics theory that determined a person's intelligence was due to inherited traits. Schools created special classes for these students, resulting in the twenty-first century creation of inclusion classrooms in American schools.

Like Ryan, Skiba et al. (2008) argued that the medical practices in the Twentieth century followed eugenics theory and that non-Northern European people were deemed inferior and should be segregated to maintain race purity. While the Civil Rights movement inspired racial desegregation of schools, students with learning disabilities are often placed in segregated learning environments. White Rose Middle was the only school in the district that supported inclusion classrooms without the option of self-contained classrooms, therefore the students placed in these classes were coming directly from self-contained special education programs. The students without disabilities in the

inclusion classroom did not have consistent exposure to peers with disabilities, therefore the learning environment became one needing instructional guidance on both the content area and social interaction.

Dewey (1929) believed that in education it is an individual's responsibility to promote social consciousness in the human race in a way that promotes psychological and social equality. Due to the school district failing to create inclusion classrooms in the elementary schools that feed into White Rose Middle, the climate in the inclusion classroom presented with social and behavioral conflict. Therefore, incorporating the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© into instruction in the inclusion classroom strove towards an intervention on a social and emotional scale that met the needs of all the students.

Minorities and special education. Education for freed slaves in the South followed the ideals of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, in which African Americans received an industrial education to become productive members of society (Spring, 2014). Washington based the Tuskegee Institute on his formal education at Hampton, which focused on teaching African Americans "proper work habits and moral behavior" (Spring, 2014, p. 188). Spring (2014) stated that "Hampton was to be the agent for civilizing freed slaves" and that "African Americans would be 'civilized' and brought to accept their subordinate place in society" (p. 188).

In the history of education, students of color have been segregated within the schools. In the early 1900's the Normal schools determined that backward children were a special class of students that needed to be segregated from the population of other students. Franklin (1994) determined that the industrial changes in the Nineteenth century

increased school populations, which in turn increased the population of "backward" students. The students with behavioral problems, typically identified as boys, could be placed in exclusionary classes, resulting in the segregation of students within the schools (Franklin, 1994). When the U.S. desegregated schools and merged African-American students, Native American students, and White students together, the historical practices of segregating the students with behavior problems into exclusionary classes returned (Franklin, 1994). Many students in these classes included racial minority students and poor students who were deemed underprivileged and carried the historical perception of behavioral problems associated with minorities in the schools (Franklin, 1994).

In education, the United States has suffered the issue of the Educational Gap, a divide between the high achieving students and the low achieving students, between the high socioeconomic status and the low socioeconomic status, and between the privileged and unprivileged (Howard, 2010). American schools determined who attended schools and who were deemed as the privileged class via racism, eugenics, and race-intelligence theories. Racism is characterized by belief in superiority, a group's ability to commit racist acts, and to have those acts affect racial or ethnic groups (Howard, 2010). Howard (2010) determined that eugenics in the 1920s "reveals how race, ethnicity, and intelligence became socially constructed, and how schools became places where the mental superiority of certain groups could be 'proven' based on students' performance on cognitive tasks or intelligence tests" (p. 97). These cognitive tests led to special classes for "backward" children.

D'Amico (2016) determined that students of color continued to be tracked based on race after integration. She stated that though *Brown vs. Board of Education* promised

integration of schools, in the 1960s children of color were tracked and marginalized into special education classes (D'Amico, 2016). D'Amico (2016) argued that, "in the mid-19ᵗʰ century, changing perceptions of the role of government fueled by massive immigration gave way to some of the country's most fundamental institutions: public education, municipal police and fire departments, public hospitals" (p.543). Due to these governmental developments, the institutions of public education and police departments developed along the same ideals, incurring the same prejudices against immigrants and minority citizens.

      English language learners in the inclusion classroom. Moreno and Bullock (2015) discussed the implications of misidentifying Latino students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) which resulted in them being disproportionately placed in the special education classroom, due to a "diversity rift" where "many educators may unknowingly demonstrate cultural misperceptions, exacerbate student alienation, and hold low academic/behavioral expectations" (p. 37). They determined that functional behavior analysis (FBA) can help determine the cause of the student's behavior and assure that he or she is placed in the appropriate classroom setting, rather than falling back on the special education classroom setting. Zero tolerance policies and the lack of prereferral behavioral investigations can hinder the fidelity and process of getting a student in need referred properly (Moreno & Bullock, 2015). Additionally, the EBD identification process can focus on issues of discipline and assessment results, which leads to a misidentification of a disability. They determined that the behavior of a Latino child in the classroom that is a English Language Learner may revolve around frustration with language acquisition rather than a disability. Moreno and Bullock (2015) concluded

that due to a lack of school resources, many educators and schools may not have the ability to provide appropriate services in the general education classroom for Latino students.

Kim and Garcia (2014) also discussed the misidentified English Language Learner (ELL) student as an issue within schools. They determined that ELL students who have been attending public schools in the U.S. for seven years or more are categorized as long-term ELLs (Kim & Garcia, 2014). They found that ELL programs in secondary schools are designed for students who are just entering the U.S. and assume they have been educated in their native language (Kim & Garcia, 2014). These programs failed to address the needs of long-term ELL students and instead served as a one-size-fits-all model of language support, placing these students in classes that underserved them. They stated that alternative options were remedial courses that placed the ELL students in special education classes to help them further acquire the English content, which results in low engagement, higher retention and dropout rates, and mistaken referrals to special education classes (Kim & Garcia, 2014). Kim and Garcia (2014) determined that "ELLs continue to be inappropriately served in special education without adequate consideration of cultural, linguistic, and experiential factors" resulting in the decrease in language support they need to succeed (p. 301). After interviewing and gathering data on their participants, Kim and Garcia (2014) found that ELL students entering secondary schools must learn in English-only classes, even if they are not proficient, which makes them reliant on linguistic services provided to the newest ELL students just entering the schools. Thus, these ELLs were placed in special education

classrooms, which proved less rigorous and more distracting due to lacking proficiency in the English language.

Fernandez and Inserra (2013) suggested that the reason for disproportionate classification of ELL students into special education could be due to the lack of training provided to mainstream teachers in understanding the process needed before suggesting a student should be referred to special education. They stated the teachers used standardized testing results and classroom behavior as indicators for referring an ELL student to special education. Fernandez and Inserra (2013) suggested that ELLs lacking proficiency in their native language may perform poorly on bilingual examinations, resulting in the person giving the assessment to conclude that the child should be categorized as having a learning disability. Due to the risk of inaccurate results, the ELL student should be given a period of time for language acculturation, which is the "process of acquiring English while maintaining the dominant language" (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013, p. 2). Additionally, the federal guidelines determined that an ELL student should be on grade level in three years, yet acculturation and the acquisition of academic language takes five to seven years.

Cole (2014) argued that testing for language proficiency before referring for special education services should be done to determine if an ELL student is displaying a disability or is in the process of becoming proficient in their native and secondary languages. He stated that there were several influential factors that contributed to an ELL being referred to special education, including tests not provided in a student's native language, a lack of bilingual examiners, teacher preparation courses failing to address the best practices for ELL students, and a failure to comply to regulations pertaining to

educating ELLs students with equity (Cole, 2014). Cole (2014) stated that teachers and schools should question test validity when ELL students do not receive tests in their native languages, diminishing the validity of those tests. Therefore, ELLs should be tested in their native languages and in English. He determined that federal guidelines indicate that ELLs who have proven proficient in their native language are ready for the English-only setting without bilingual academic support. Cole (2014) stated that the ELL student's first language matters and that their skills and weaknesses in a subject are better revealed if tested in their native language.

In schools like WRMS, bilingual instruction was not guaranteed and was determined based on the support staff the district can afford. ELLs were frequently placed in the inclusion classroom without an official classification of the students having a learning disability. While ELLs have academic support with an ESL teacher, when they transitioned completely into the regular English classroom they were expected to perform using English only and denied the bilingual education support. This caused frustration for these students placed in the inclusion classroom, resulting in increased behavioral disruptions which drew the gaze of their peers. The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© instilled an environment based on community and trust, promoting peers towards positive interactions and helping each other when they are frustrated.

Scientific Curriculum Making and Societal Intelligence

This section discussed the inequalities in education during the Civil Rights movement and the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and their effects on students with learning disabilities. It addressed the impact of career education and educational reform from the 1960s to 2015 and the effects of the economy on educational

reform mandates, that impact placements and testing for students with disabilities. It addressed the negative impact on experiences for special education students on standardized tests. This research illustrated the emotional and psychological struggles students with learning disabilities face during the end of the year testing and the marginalization students experience as they attempt to make growth from their peers and their teachers.

Scientific curriculum making led to social stratification of social classes in American Schools. According to Callahan (1962), Frederick W. Taylor's scientific management of schools, called "Taylorism," gave managerial power to administrators, which in turn focused schools toward standardization practices. This led to intelligence tests that separated the immigrant and racial classes in American society and the goal at preventing the diminishment of the intelligence of Americans through the practices of eugenics (Callahan 1962). Therefore, using intelligence tests to determine the social and racial classes in American schools became a standardized practice for separating the highly intelligent from students with lower intelligence and capabilities.

In the creation of special programs for "backwards" and "subnormal" children, New York's Superintendent, William L. Ettinger stated, "The proper classification and segregation of such children was…desirable, not only from a humanitarian, but also an economic standpoint" (Franklin, 1994, p. 6). Tropea (1987) determined that the attendance laws placed into effect changed how students were segregated in schools to excludes them from an equitable education. These laws increased the enrollments of classes for students with disabilities and maintained that these students remained segregated from the student population until the 1970s. The use of intelligence tests and

the Scholastic Aptitude Test created the continued effort to stratify society into social classes by intelligence.

The American school and society feared the decline of intelligence due to the inclusion of immigrants, minorities, and those with disabilities, which led to segregation. B. A. Ferri and D. J. Connor (2005) determined that in *Brown v. Board of Education*, "Chief Justice Warren wrote that the practice of segregating students by race creates in black students 'a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way very unlikely ever to be done'" (p. 455). This statement illustrated the intertwining of race with disability as special education classes were created and then populated by Black students who were labeled as disabled due to their perceived inferiority. Ferri and Connor (2005) argued that the language of race and disability are used to exclude and marginalize students from minority cultures. They determined that the gradualism practices in education from exclusive classrooms towards inclusive classrooms proves ineffective and flawed, as it mirrors the gradualism practices during the desegregation of schools. While they argued that the special education population in urban schools are populated with many students of color, including Hispanics, WRMS' special education population was predominantly White. Yet, on closer inspection, the special education students had a male to female disparity with the larger population presenting as White males. The population also divided along social class lines with a higher population of students from poverty documented with learning disabilities.

Bruner (1966) stated, "while all humans are intrinsically human, the expression of their humanity is affected by what manner of childhood they have experienced" (Flinders

55

& Thorton, 2013, p. 87). In Bruner's goals for instruction, teacher success should be achieved by ideals that give them respect, power of thought for the human condition, the ability to analyze their social world and the plight of man, and the understanding of the continuing evolution of man. The segregation of white males in U.S. schools with learning disabilities in inclusion classes, due to IDEA mandates that determine that students with disabilities must be served in specialized classes for their needs, shows that South Carolina schools continue to separate students based on their intelligence by test scores and disabilities. Beratan (2008) determined that "[IDEA] is an improvement on the non-educational institutions and asylums it was designed to replace," though he determined that it promotes the idea of "institutional ableism" in schools (p. 341). IDEA states that "children with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate" (1975). The ideal inclusion classroom should consist of students in the course that have a balance between races and disabilities, rather than have a higher percentage of white males with disabilities and behavioral problems.

Historical issues in multicultural education. During the Civil Rights Movement, the voice of students with learning disabilities became heard in 1960 at the United Nations Convention against Discrimination in Education. Springs (2014) stated, "The convention defined educational discrimination as 'any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference…based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, [and] economic condition or birth'" (p. 386). While the convention promoted the equal education of all students, the ways in which legislation stated how they would protect the rights of children with disabilities resulted in federal

56

control that gave the educators political power over the determining factors of a child's education. Neal and Kirp (1986) determined that an IEP allows teachers the capabilities of using their discretion to influence placement decisions. This proves an ethical liability for educators and administrators who hold the power of a child's education, in their decision whether to offer or continue services to a child. If the child demonstrates that they are "educatable" then they may risk losing services for their learning disability.

The economics of education in the district WRMS is located, illustrates the lack of federal funding needed to provide services to students with learning disabilities. In the past three years, the district eliminated instructional coaches for reading and mathematics education. The Language Arts and Mathematics Prep courses were phased out in WRMS for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) elective to provide an active learning environment in STEM education. Our students with learning disabilities, due to the implementation of WRMS's inclusion education, used one of their elective courses as their resource class every nine weeks. Therefore, the inclusion students identified with a learning disability, lost the experience of STEM education due to the required courses of physical education, keyboarding, personal finance, and art. Our students with learning disabilities did not receive a truly equal education due to WRMS implementing inclusion practices inappropriately, though they followed state guidelines for special education practices.

Due to the inequity of education for students in special education, these students developed frustration during core classes, since they perceived the differences in their education compared to their peers not in special education. They developed an animosity for being placed in the inclusion classroom, labeling themselves as "stupid" or "slow."

57

They have a perceived inability to succeed, which leads them towards behavior that requires positive support and reinforcement to begin rebuilding their self-esteem. The bullying prevention program can help with rebuilding self-confidence, through the community and team-building activities in the classroom.

High-stakes tests and the education of students with disabilities. The historical development of education for students with learning disabilities in the United States directly relates to the influence of standardized testing. As legislation progressed to include all students in standardized test scores, the decline of school scores and the concern for the global marketplace increased. Spring (2014) argued that Marland, Nixon's commissioner of education, "believed that career education was the answer to student rebellion, delinquency, and unemployment" and that "education should be meaningful…. related to a career objective" (Springs 2014, p. 427). Educational standards changed to promote career education, which led to schools tracking students by their abilities into technical careers for the workforce. To determine ability, states used standards and testing to evaluate students' intellectual abilities, which ultimately led public schools to show growth and provide diverse curriculum for their student population. According to the SCCCRS (2016), Communication Standard 3 states that a student should be able to "Communicate information through strategic use of multiple modalities and multimedia to enrich understanding when presenting ideas and information" (p. 5). The communication standard builds upon the literacy, reading literature and informational texts, and writing standards in order to develop student skills towards being ready for college or a career. This standard, though redeveloped in 2016,

directly relates to Nixon's goals of creating public schools as centers for career-oriented students.

As education reform continued, schools were classified as being at risk. President Reagan's 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, "blamed public schools for America's difficulties in competing with Japan and West Germany in world markets" (p. 167). This report called for reform in the states to develop curriculum standards, improve its teachers, and standardize the curriculum to show growth (Reagan, 1983). Public schools included businesses and communities into the education of students in the United States, which lead to further educational reform through the Goals 2000 Educate America Act. These acts linked businesses to the education system to develop students to become a competitive workforce in the U.S. (Spring 2014). This legislation was the development of a Head Start program and providing more opportunities for children from poor families, leading Congress to reauthorizing Title I of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, renamed No Child Left Behind (Bush, 2001). The change in the No Child Left Behind law was that now all students in need of help was covered by the law instead of a specified group of students. This resulted in schools and districts not only having to provide annual report cards to students, but also reporting the assessment scores by district and schools.

One of the issues with the No Child Left Behind law is that students with Learning Disabilities were now included in high-stakes testing, since it required the inclusion of all students. Spring (2014) argued that NCLB promoted a single language and culture for the U.S., which resulted in a movement towards an equal society and equal education that is undermined by legislation and educational reform, stratifying

students, schools, and districts by their test scores. The continued educational reform movement, based on resulting test scores, inspired President Obama's Race to the Top, included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Spring (2014) stated that the second goal of Race to the Top was to track schools and teachers through the standardization of student growth from a single test, with the goal to improve instruction.

According to the South Carolina State Board of Education's statute, 43-243 – Special Education, Education of Students with Disabilities, a child with a disability is defined as:

> (1) Child with a disability means a child evaluated in accordance with Secs. 300.304 through 300.311 as having intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as "emotional disturbance"), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, and other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services. (State Registrar 2011)

Therefore, students diagnosed with learning disabilities must be included in not only the inclusion classroom but also on high-stakes testing. In addition, Molly Spearman, the State Superintendent of Education, released a memorandum that eliminated oral accommodations for the SCREADY test in English Language Arts for all sections (Memorandum, SC State Dept. of Ed., 2015). Spearman (2015) issued, "To meet state and federal requirements, all students must participate in the SC READY assessments, unless a student's IEP team has determined that the student should take an alternate

assessment based on alternate achievement standards" (in Memorandum). She further

stated, "Oral administration is not allowed on either session of the ELA test for spring

2016" (in Memorandum, Spearman 2015). Due to these guidelines, students with learning

disabilities, unless pervasive enough to create alternate assessments, are required to take

the SC READY assessment with their peers, and without accommodations.

Many of the students at WRMS in the inclusion classrooms, due to their lower

reading achievement, were at risk of performing poorly on the SC READY test without

accommodations for the first time in their educational careers. Without these

accommodations, the students failed to be tested on what they were capable of knowing

and what they had learned, due to the impact of their learning disabilities. The results of

the high-stakes tests for these students not only negatively impacted the students, but also

reported their teachers, schools, and districts as ineffective in their instructional practices.

Additionally, standardized test scores are negatively impacted and correlated with student

behavior in the classroom and at school. By providing a bullying prevention program as a

functional behavioral analysis intervention in the inclusion classroom, the improved

behavior and classroom community led to interwoven instruction, resulting in the chance

for improvement on standardized test scores.

Current Research in the Literature

This section investigated the research in current educational theories and practices

that address the behavior of students in the inclusion classroom. The section introduced

the impact of student differences within the inclusion classroom and their perceptions of

each other. The research discussed the impact of school discipline for students with

learning disabilities, to determine the best educational practices and procedures for

behavioral disruptions. Research on Function-Based Interventions and teacher perceptions on students with learning and behavioral disabilities helpd to provide a clearer picture of disciplinary practices in schools like WRMS. The research then investigated faculty perceptions of interventions for students with disabilities.

According to Burbules and Rice (1991), a dialogue across differences benefits education since it "foster[s] a broader and more inclusive sense of one's self and one's relations to others" (p. 404). They determined that this was closely aligned with John Dewey's view of democracy in education, since it promotes tolerance through relationships between different people and helps with conflict resolution. Burbules and Rice (1991) addressed, that people's differences indicated that they possessed similarities to the privileged class. Due to this, Burbules and Rice (1991) determined that the differences in education revealed the similarities of the varying groups and that a person could simultaneously be the same and different without placing themselves in a specific identity group. Their research relates to the differences between students with disabilities and their peers as the issues that require discourse to increase understanding in the classroom. Since the students without disabilities and the students with disabilities receive the same instruction, their differences are highlighted through the added assistance and behavioral modification needed to help the students with their learning disabilities.

Function-Based Behavioral Interventions. Like Burbules and Rice, Ingram, Lewis-Palmer, and Sugai (2005) address the differences in education surrounding students with disabilities and the methods to resolve behavioral issues in the classroom. In their study, Ingram et al. (2005) replicated Ellingson et al.'s study that compared two

interventions for students with mental disabilities in the special education classroom. In their study, they compared intervention strategies aligned with FBA to strategies not aligned with FBA to determine if there were decreases in problematic behavior. Function-based behavioral interventions entail creating a specific intervention for the individual student based on the behavior they are exhibiting (Ingram et al., 2005). They stated, "When schools invest in the establishment and maintenance of positive school-wide learning and teaching environments, the incidence and prevalence of problem behaviors can be lowered" (Ingram et al., 2005, p. 224). They determined that function-based behavioral interventions over non-function-based interventions resulted in lower incidence of negative behavior in the classroom.

Smith, Bicard, Bicard, and Casey (2012) also determined that function-based interventions resulted in lower discipline infractions. Their study focused on assessing the effects of function-based classroom interventions on the rate of ODRs and ISS placements (Smith et al., 2012). By studying students who had behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) that received multiple office discipline referrals, they found that a function-based intervention lowered the students' office referrals. This resulted in those students receiving more in-class instruction. This directly correlates to the current inclusion class setting where two of the students have behavioral intervention plans and a third is in the process of receiving one in order to address his behaviors. If function-based interventions were incorporated, then the discourse between the students and their teachers would create a deeper understanding of what is occurring and promote a positive environment in the classroom.

While Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) positively affects students with behavioral and emotional disabilities, Fox and Davis (2005) discovered the application of FBA rarely aligned with the individual students needs in the classroom. In reviewing FBA studies from 1980 to 2001, they found that data for the application of FBA in schools was either deficient in the application of FBA or failed to adjust for a student's behavioral needs. Fox and Davis (2005) stated, pertaining to the deficiencies and varying levels of FBA training, that they reported "missing or vague behavior definitions, over reliance on indirect assessment, lack of validation of hypothesized function of behavior, failure to link intervention with the assessed function of the behavior and use of either aversive interventions or continuation of previously unsuccessful interventions" (p. 3). They determined that FBA teams failed to analyze a student until after the student's behavior was pervasively disruptive in the classroom (Fox & Davis, 2005). Frequently the interventions were also punitive interventions, instead of positive interventions.

Due to these studies' findings, bullying prevention education in the inclusion classroom should result in a positive classroom environment and result in lower negative behaviors, since it will be used as a whole class FBA treatment that reinforces the SWPBIS system. The program could prevent pervasively disruptive behaviors, since it initially addresses the impact of these types of behaviors and instead moves towards creating a community environment that helps and supports each other.

Faculty perceptions of interventions for students with disabilities. While function-based interventions are beginning to prove valuable, schools like White Rose Middle have yet to connect the secondary student's disability with their behavioral issues. Butera, McMullen, and Henderson (1997) determined that IEPs only address academics

and failed to look at the impact of a student's behavior on their education. They investigated teachers' perspective towards the application of IEPs and found that the teachers received little training to manage the social and emotional needs of students with IEPs, felt that the IEPs were means to "circumvent discipline procedures," and that many teachers view discipline issues from an equitable stance, expecting the student living with a disability to meet the guidelines of the classroom equally with their peers. (Butera et al., 1997, p. 174) Butera et al.'s (1997) concluded that a school's faculty frequently fails to connect a student's disabilities with their behavior.

Another issue surrounding the difficulty of teachers connecting learning and emotional disabilities with a student's behavior stems from the types of strategies and accommodations provided to the students with IEPs, BIPs, and 504 Plans. According to Speil, Evans, and Langberg (2014), the services provided to students with IEPs and 504 Plans are based on academic goals to increase test scores and course grades. They investigated the research practices and services provided to students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to determine which services were the most effective accommodations used for students with IEPs and 504 Plans. They found that goals based on academics tended to decrease expectations of a student's performance and failed to address the emotional and behavioral symptoms students presented with in class. In contrast, Speil et. al. (2014) determined that "if the goal is to enhance the competencies of students so they can independently meet age-appropriate social, behavioral, and academic expectations, many of the most common services provided to students with ADHD will be inadequate" (p. 465).

As a solution, Kinch et. al. (2001), determined that students with chronic problem behaviors at school need modifications to their academic IEP. They developed three criteria schools need to follow to create an alternative plan, as follows:

1. Schools must be able to access and use relevant, efficient, and effective strategies to address the increasing and intensifying needs of their students.

2. Behavior intervention plans must be based on information determined by a functional behavior assessment (FBA).

3. Schools must generalize the FBA approach across a broad range of student ability levels. (p.481)

Due to the combined issues of experiences beyond the school compounded with difficult social and emotional interactions, students with IEPs, BIPs, and 504 Plans entered the inclusion classroom with a deficit in their competencies educationally and behaviorally, negatively impacting the perception of both their peers and teachers.

Wilkinson (2005) investigated teacher perceptions towards Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC), where the general education teacher, the special education teacher, school counselor, and parents work as a team to help observe and teach a student to self-manage their behavioral actions in the classroom. He found that in the two students studied, CBC revealed a positive outcome for the students' behaviors in the inclusive classroom. Wilkinson (2005) stated, "Most general education teachers have received limited training in behavior management procedures and report a lack of preparedness in working with students with [emotional and behavioral disorders]" (p. 73). While his study proved effective for those two male students, the issues surrounding the study showed that the students were in a school with a 16% SES rate and that the students were

already classified as displaying inappropriate behavior in the classroom that resulted in disruption and discipline interventions.

The inclusion classroom at WRMS traditionally had a higher rate of male students diagnosed with behavioral and learning disabilities. The implementation of the bully prevention program, while not specifically designed to help with learning disabilities, did assist in the decrease of negative behavior in the classroom. In the classroom instruction, the program promoted student discourse that allows the educator to guide them toward appropriate definitions and applications of the bully prevention concepts. It allowed the students to process what they learn and then apply it to their lives, which made the program relevant.

Implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*©

This final section addressed the implementation of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©.* The validity and reliability of the program was discussed to determine if it was an effective implementation of bully prevention in the middle school setting. The *OBPP©* also was discussed in a dual implementation with another program to determine if a decrease in bullying incidents occurred. Finally, the *OBPP©* is discussed in detail to illustrate the appropriate implementation of the program for the best results and to determine why former implementations were effective or ineffective.

The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* was a school-centered approach for creating safe and positive school environments. Since it was an approach directed for all students, the difficulties of aggression from students with learning disabilities proved challenging. Sullivan, Sutherland, Farrell, Taylor, and Doyle (2016) researched the effects of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* on students with disabilities and

whether an additional treatment program in conjunction with the *OBPP©* would prove effective. They stated that middle school students "with disabilities may be at a higher risk for exposure to peer-based aggression when compared to peers without disabilities" (Sullivan et al., 2016). The methods used in the study included sixth, seventh, and eighth graders in fourteen classrooms. Eighty-nine percent of the students in the study qualified for free and reduced lunch, and 237 of the 359 students eligible obtained parental permission (Sullivan et al., 2016). Two hundred thirty-one students were included in their analysis, with 114 students in the intervention group and 117 in the comparison group (Sullivan et al., 2016). Student demographics were as follows: 48% male, 67% African American, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 17% Multiracial, 9% other; and 48 of these students received special education services (Sullivan et al., 2016, p. 4). Sullivan et al. (2016) randomized the study in the grades for equal numbers of intervention and comparison students, the violence prevention program was implemented from November 2011 – April 2012, and baseline data was collected prior to the intervention in October – November 2011. Their intervention included using the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* at the schoolwide level and the *Second Step* program in the intervention study. They based their study on the positive effects of the *OBPP©* on middle school students. Sullivan et. al. (2016) found, "Students in *OBPP* intervention schools reported increased perceptions of students intervening in bullying situations compared to students in control schools," (p. 2). Additionally, in cohort schools using the *OBPP©* they found that seventh graders showed a decrease in bullying behaviors and social exclusions, while eighth graders had mixed findings with females in the cohorts. Overall, they determined that the *OBPP©* was an effective treatment for all students. Their previous studies on the

OBPP© indicated that the students with disabilities needed additional support in learning

emotional regulation and social skills that help them perceive bullying situations.

Sullivan et. al. (2016) determined that a secondary program, *Second Step*, would be

added to an intervention group of students to determine if it had additional positive

effects for students. All students received the *OBPP©.* They found that students with

disabilities responded positively to both the *OBPP©* and *Second Step,* resulting in

enhanced social skills and abilities to understand bullying situations. In contrast, the dual

program intervention increased the anger regulation in students without disabilities.

Lee and Cornell (2010) investigated the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire used

before treatment of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©.* They focused on the

reliability and validity of self-reported bullying questionnaires in comparison to peer

nominations, discipline referrals, and poor academic performance. They used the Olweus

Bully/Victim Questionnaire (BVQ) since it "is the most widely used bullying self-report

survey in the world" (Lee & Cornell, 2010, p. 57). Lee and Cornell (2010) claimed that

from the BVQ combined with the data from discipline infractions and poor academic

performance would provide reliability and reduce measurement error. Lee and Cornell

(2010) conducted surveys of 202 students attending a suburban middle school in central

Virginia during the 2005-2006 school year. The student demographics for the study

consisted of 48% boys, 52% girls with a mean age of 12, who were in sixth, seventh, and

eighth grade (Lee & Cornell, 2010). The students also consisted of 66% White, 19%

African American, 3% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 6% other. Lee and Cornell (2010) used

the revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire to measure the students' perceptions of

bullying within their school climate, which was a 5-point Likert scale (Lee & Cornell,

2010). Lee and Cornell (2010) found that there was a "modest correspondence between students who identified themselves as bullies on the BVQ and peer nominations for bullying and academic grades, and no relationship with discipline referrals" (p. 68). The lack of a correlation of the BVQ to additional factors led them to believe the use of student self-reporting to measure the prevalence of bullying could be flawed. Lee and Cornell (2010) also found that victims received higher rates of discipline infractions over bullies, which they suggested could be from frustration of being bullied. They also found that students self-identified more with being victims rather than bullies, suggesting that it was easier for students to recognize when they were being bullied over when they are bullying others.

Limber (2011) addressed the adaptations of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* in United States schools. She provided a foundation of what the *OBPP©* should consist of when implemented in schools, including: goals and principles, program components, the creation of a bullying prevention coordinating committee, training, the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, staff discussion groups, school rules, classroom meetings and interventions, and community and parent involvement. Limber (2011) stated, "The OBPP was designed to reduce existing bullying problems among students at school, prevent the development of new bullying problems, and improve peer relations at school" (p. 72).

The school-level component consists of creating a Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee (BPCC) that is responsible for assuring the components are implemented correctly (Limber 2011). All members of the BPCC would receive extensive training in the effective implementation of the *OBPP©*. Limber (2011) stated

70

that the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (OBQ), a preliminary survey, has "yielded internal consistency reliabilities" and validity reporting "scales assessing being bullied of bullying others correlated in the .40-.60 range" (p. 74). With consistent reliability and consistency reported, the program founds its research in proven scales if it is implemented with fidelity. At the classroom-level, teachers are instructed to adopt and post four rules to bulling, which are:

1. We will not bully others.

2. We will try to help students who are bullied.

3. We will try to include students who are left out.

4. If we know that someone is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home. (Limber, 2011, p. 75)

Classroom meetings are another component that consists of lessons addressing bullying issues (Limber 2011). They aim at building cohesion in the class and to give students the chance to discuss the rules about bullying and their roles in preventing bullying in their school. The individual-level component provides students and staff with on-the-spot and follow-up interventions when they are involved in bullying incidents. The community-level component was specifically designed for U.S. schools to include the participation and support beyond the school environment (Limber 2011). By involving the community, students receive reinforcement in the community as they continue to interact with their peers.

When the program was implemented in South Carolina, the first state to receive the program, Limber found that the rural schools that implemented the program in the first year had an overall decrease 28% in bullying incidents. Yet the second-year

71

implementation in South Carolina schools had a low rate of fidelity in using the program, therefore the results were considered to not be faithful to the implementation of the *OBPP©*. Since positive results require the program to involve weekly class meetings and the adoption of class rules, Limber's (2011) findings indicate it is necessary to follow the guidelines of the program to show a decrease in bullying incidents.

Conclusion

This review of literature addressed topics of concern that impact the inclusion classroom and students with learning disabilities. It investigated the research surround progressivism, multiculturalism, and essentialism theory by looking at the best practices for learning through experience in the classroom and how the standardization of the school environment creates a dichotomy between inquiry learning and standards-based curriculum design. Discipline practices towards students with learning disabilities and behavior intervention plans were addressed to illustrate the increase of discipline infractions for students in special education, due to administrator perceptions and ineffective intervention programs in secondary schools. The historical practices in American schools addressed the segregation of minority and immigrant students in special education to show how students with learning disabilities are experiencing similar practices based on their intellectual abilities. The segregation of foreign students into special education settings was addressed as a continuing practice in American schools. Current research approached the appropriate ways to provide behavioral interventions for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities, and focused on the intervention practices in schools that fail to address the needs of students with disabilities. Therefore, the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* was investigated to show its reliability in

decreasing bullying behaviors, and provides a possible valid means for addressing the

behavioral needs of the student with a learning disability.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

At White Rose Middle School(WRMS) identified special education students drew the gaze of their fellow students in the inclusion classroom when they displayed negative behavior and interrupted the classroom environment. Students with learning disabilities and negative behavior have the right to a free and appropriate education, even when it proves difficult to address their educational accommodations and their emotional needs. English language learners (ELL) were also placed in the inclusion classroom to receive assistance from two teachers to help them succeed in the English classroom and may not be the best placement for ELL students if they do not have a documented learning disability. The participant researcher of the present action research study was involved with special services at WRMS as a core English teacher with an inclusion classroom.

The present action research study focused on the issues surrounding the implementation the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© on middle-level students in an inclusion classroom. These students were often from a low socioeconomic background who had been identified by the school district as "learning disabled," who were documented in the school as having behavior problems in the traditional classroom structure, and included the population of ELL and general education students. The research question was as follows: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (*OBPP*)© on middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled?"

The secondary research questions were as follows:

SRQ1: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*

(OBPP)© on the knowledge about bullying of middle-level students who have

been identified as "learning disabled"?

SRQ2: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*

(OBPP)© on the bullying behavior of middle-level students who have been

identified as "learning disabled"?

SRQ3: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*

(OBPP)© on the perception of the school bullying of middle-level students who

have been identified as "learning disabled"?

SRQ4: How do middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"

react to the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)?*

Research Design

Mills (2014) stated that "action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by

teacher researchers, administrators, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the

teaching/learning environment" to gather information about the operations of their

schools, their instruction, and student learning (p. 8). This inquiry process should involve

a social change, that requires the members to become active participants in the study

(Efron & Ravid, 2013). The process of action research is cyclical and involves collecting

data, planning the study, implementing an intervention, and evaluating the results of the

implementation (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Mertler, 2014; Kerr & Anderson, 2015). This

action research allowed the researcher to use educational theory to conduct research and

reflected on its application in her own practices to improve the learning environment and

to become more effective in her practices as a participant in the environment. This resulted in a direct connection to the improvement of the school. It also empowered the action researcher by promoting professional growth and using researched best practices to understand the impact of instruction. Mertler (2014) determined that the application of theory in classrooms combined with analyzed data from classrooms leads to a teacher incorporating best educational practices effectively and knowledgeably, and reflecting on those practices, leads the teacher to become a master teacher. Like the process of writing and editing, action research is a recursive process that develops and revisits the questions it poses as the researcher reflected upon the results after implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* in the inclusion classroom.

Action research also had the characteristics of being constructivist, situational, practical, systematic, and cyclical (Efron & Ravid, 2013). The constructivist positioned the researcher as generating knowledge from her research-based actions, where she searched to understand the context of her research, or the situation (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Yet, the researcher remained practical by approaching the research to relevantly improve her practice in a systematic and planned way (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Teacher empowerment led to the final benefit of action research, which was professional growth. That professional growth directly related to the cyclical process of defining and redefining the gained knowledge in a process that made changes for improvement from previous findings (Efron & Ravid, 2013). By incorporating action research, teachers become active participants in their own professional growth. Action research allows teachers to develop the skills they need for classroom instruction and practices that

addresses realistic needs in their classrooms and schools. Action research allows teachers to become agents for change in their own schools and take ownership in the environments they create and interact within.

The research plan should guide the design and implementation of the study to answer the research questions. Due to the study impacting students in the classroom, the study was a quasi-experimental design since random selection cannot occur. Instead, the inclusion classroom, consisting of students with behavioral infractions and students with learning disabilities, was used as the intervention group to determine if the *OBPP©* intervention showed a significant difference in behavior.

The action research study incorporated a concurrent mixed methods design (Coe et al., 2017). In this design, both quantitative and qualitative elements occurred in the study. The statistical information about student bullying knowledge, student bullying behavior, and student perceptions of bullying in the school were collected and then followed by the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* lessons that gained a deeper understanding of students' reactions to the bullying program.

Data collection methods. Quantitative data was collected through a one-group pretest-posttest design. The pretest and posttest was an assessment to determine student understanding of bullying before and after the treatment. The researcher conducted a pre- and post-observation of student behavior to determine changes in student behavior and peer interaction. A pre- and post-questionnaire was given before and after the intervention of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* lessons to determine students' perceptions of the rates and types of bullying they are experiencing The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* classroom lessons were the treatment. Qualitative data was

collected through lessons audio recorded that were later transcribed for analysis. The qualitative data for the study will stem from the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© classroom lessons transcripts. The researcher kept field notes as a part of the qualitative data in order to document her classroom observations, which were first recorded and then transcribed to find patterns and themes used by the students in the study.

Data collection instruments. The action research study incorporated a concurrent mixed methods design that analyzed quantitative and qualitative data (Coe et al., 2017).

Quantitative Data. The quantitative data was collected through a one-group pre- and post-test design. The bullying knowledge pre- and posttest was a researcher-created assessment to determine student understanding of bullying before and after the intervention of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© in the classroom (Appendix A). It consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions that assessed each student's understanding of the definition of bullying and identifying bullying. It asked questions about the percentage of students bullied in South Carolina schools, the types of bullying the different genders participated in, and the causes of bullying. It assessed the characteristics of bullies, victims, and bystanders. The research question connected to the bullying knowledge pre- and posttest instrument is shown in Table 3.1.

The researcher conducted a pre-observation of bullying behavior for the intervention group to determine classroom behaviors before implementation of the treatment (Appendix B). She used the same chart to conduct a post-observation of bullying behavior to determine if there were significant changes in student behavior and peer interaction. The chart, designed from Mertler's (2014) Likert-type scale instrument, tracked student behavior in the classroom. It addressed the following behaviors: relates

well to peers, self-confidence, aggressive towards peers, quiet and withdrawn, complains of illness, blames others, impulsive actions, and lack of empathy. These eight categories were determined from frequent bullying behaviors occurring in the classroom that resulted in disruption or a distraction from the class lesson. The research question connected to the pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior instrument is shown in Table 3.1.

The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (Appendix C), which is a student survey that was constructed in a 5-point Likert-type scale, was given to the intervention group before and after the treatment of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* lessons to determine the student perceptions of bullying. The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire consisted of 40 Likert-type scale questions that asked students their perceptions of bullying within their school. Questions 1-2 were demographic questions about which grade the student is in and their gender, and questions 3-4 asked the students about their personal perception of school. Questions 5-14 were a traditional 5-point Likert-type scale, with question 13 having an additional question about cyber bullying. Questions 15-24 asked specific multiple-choice questions about a student's experience with bullying situations. Questions 25-34 returned to the 5-point Likert-type question about a student's frequency to interact in bullying situations, with extended questions for question 33. Questions 35-40 were multiple choice and specifically asked questions about the frequency of bullying and a student's likelihood of participating in bullying. The questions addressed their ability to recognize bullying, their experiences with bullying, and their involvement in bullying. The questionnaire was used to determine if there were changes in perception for the intervention group before and after receiving the

intervention. The research question connected to the pre- and post-questionnaire on student perceptions of bullying instrument is shown in Table 3.1.

Qualitative Data. The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* lessons served as the intervention and included the introductory four lessons to define bullying and then 10 subsequent lessons chosen from 36 lessons available in *Class Meetings that Matter: Grades 6-8,* which was a supplementary text. The researcher chose 10 lessons that she incorporated over the 10-week intervention. The researcher was able to meet the time requirements for each lesson, as suggested by the *OBPP©,* since she conducted the intervention as a part of her classroom curriculum. The lessons she chose addressed the main issues observed in the inclusion classroom setting. The class meetings lessons addressed issues students faced during the school year and in their environment and taught them how to develop empathy and approach ways to handle difficult situations associated with bullying. The implementation of the *OBPP©* lessons included audio-recorded discussions in the classroom setting to collect qualitative data from the intervention group. Each recorded discussion was transcribed using an online transcription. The transcripts were then coded and analyzed to find patterns and themes. Similar codes were grouped into patterns and similar patterns formed the themes (Saldaña, 2009). Students were given pseudonyms to protect their identities in reporting their responses. Those patterns were then aligned with the *OBPP©* lessons to determine if students developed bullying prevention language and if it coincided with the results of the quantitative data that was collected. The research question connected to the classroom lessons instrument is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Research Questions and Data Collection Instruments

Research Questions	Data Collection Instruments
RQ1: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (*OBPP*)© on middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled?	The overall research question for the action research study.
SRQ1: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)*© on the knowledge about bullying of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"?	Bullying knowledge pre- and posttest
SRQ2: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)*© on the bullying behavior of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"?	Pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior
SRQ3: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)*© on the perception of school bullying of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"?	Pre- and post-questionnaire on student perceptions of bullying
SRQ4: How do middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled" react to the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)*©?	Classroom lessons

Intervention. In this section, the researcher first addressed the methods incorporated before implementing the intervention. Then the researcher discussed the intervention, the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© lessons, used for the research study. Finally, the researcher described the methods used to collect data after the implementation of the *OBPP*© lessons.

Pre-Intervention Methodology. Students were provided with permission forms to send home to their parents to sign and get approved to determine which students may be

included in the study (Appendix G). These were provided during the Parent-Teacher Orientation night to assure the permission forms were acquired before the start of the study. Then the researcher observed her students over a course of two to three days to determine the behaviors occurring in the classroom. She used the pre-treatment behavior chart to make tally marks for the behaviors she observed over these observational days (Appendix B).

After she observed the intervention group, she gave them the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire as a pre-questionnaire on perceptions of bullying (Appendix C). The students needed a pencil and turned in the pre-survey to the researcher. They did not put their names on the survey. The student responses remained anonymous but remained grouped by their class assignments. After the students took the pre-survey, the researcher gave the students a pre-test on bullying knowledge (Appendix D). Again, the students responded with a pencil on a paper-based test. These tests were tracked by student numbers, to keep the identities of the students protected.

The researcher collected demographic data before implementation of the OBPP. She went to the NWEA site to collect data from student IEP, BIP, and 504 Plans that were assigned to the class in her study.

Intervention Methodology. The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© classroom lessons were the treatment (Appendix C). The initial class meetings provided an outline on how to conduct the meetings and develop rules for preventing bullying. These class meetings occurred in five OBPP lessons, where the first meeting introduced the structure of a class meeting and its benefits, and the next four class meetings address each of the four bullying prevention rules that build upon each other.

The first meeting explained the purpose and benefits of the meeting. It also set ground rules for participating appropriately in the class meetings. Then the meeting addressed bullying and the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© and provided the students a chance to ask questions about the class meeting and what they should expect. The first meeting lasted about forty minutes and provided a script for the researcher to follow.

The second class meeting set up and explained rule 1 of the OBPP, "We will not bully others" (OBPP, 2007). The meeting helped students define bullying and what it is. Scenarios on a Teacher Guide DVD to show students what bullying is helped in developing an understanding of bullying. This class meeting guided students through the differences of bullying, rough-and-tumble play, and good-natured teasing between students. The end of the classroom meeting provided students with strategies of what to do if they witness bullying in their school or community.

The third class meeting addressed the second rule, "We will try to help students who are bullied" (OBPP, 2007). The class meeting started with asking the students to remember rules and strategies to address and report bullying they witness. It also addressed the ways students could possibly help their peers who are being bullied. A second scenario from the Teacher guide DVD was provided to show students positive ways to address bullying they witness. This was followed by a class discussion on positive ways students can help those being bullied.

The fourth class meeting addressed rule three, "We will try to include students who are left out" (OBPP, 2007). It began with remembering the previous rules and strategies that accompany those rules. Then the discussion about rule three began with

asking students what it means. Like the previous lessons, this class meeting provided the researcher with guiding questions to help navigate the students through the class meetings. In this lesson, students also created a poster with ideas and strategies they could use to prevent form leaving people out.

The fifth class meeting addressed the fourth rule, "If we know somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home" (OBPP, 2007). This class meeting began with the students remembering the previous three rules, and then guided the students through strategies they could use to report bullying. It guided the students through the reasons they should report bullying to adults and the misconceptions surrounding the act of reporting. The additional class lessons incorporated the same structure as the initial class lessons, and provided further development in understanding and developing a positive classroom climate.

After the initial class meetings were conducted, additional class meetings occurred to address building a positive classroom environment, confronting bullying in school and outside of school, building positive relationships, understanding and managing feelings, respecting differences, and cyberbullying to deal with technology and social media. Lessons from the texts, *Class Meetings that Matter* for grades 6-8 were used to specifically address issues the community in the classroom needs to discuss (Flerx et al., 2009; Snyder et al., 2012).

Post-Intervention Methodology. After the implementation of the class meetings, the researcher conducted a post-observation of bullying behavior over the course of a few days in the intervention class. She made tally marks to track the behavior she observes in the classroom. After she observe the intervention group, she gave them the Olweus

Bullying Questionnaire as a post-questionnaire on their perceptions of bullying to determine if there was a change in perception they experienced in their English class. The students used a pencil and turned in the post-questionnaire to the researcher. They did not put their names on the test. The student responses continued to remain anonymous but remained grouped by their class assignment. After the students took the post-questionnaire, the researcher gave the students the bullying knowledge posttest to determine if they acquired an understanding of the characteristics of bullying and how to recognize it. Again, the students responded with a pencil on a paper-based test. These tests were tracked by student numbers, to keep the identities of the students protected.

Research Site

The district was a rural district and covered the largest area of rural farmland in the county. The school district had five elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, and an alternative school. The enrollment was approximately 5200 students. The demographics of the district consisted of 73% Caucasian, 19% African American, 5% Hispanic, and 3% Other. 67% of the students met federal guidelines for free/reduced meals, yet the district did not apply to receive Title I funding for the schools. The district had a graduation rate of 81.7% and offered dual enrollment courses through an early college program and a middle college program in alliance with the area technical college. Students that enrolled in the early college program ended up graduating as a college sophomore. The district took pride in its comprehensive high school that offered technical training to students to prepare them for their future careers. The district also provided programs to students to help them achieve technology training and assure that

they graduated on time. The district also worked in alliance with an area university through their college of education to host interns and student teachers in the classrooms.

WRMS served the seventh and eighth grade students across the whole district. It had an enrollment close to 800 students. According to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), WRMS served 66.9 percent of students participating in Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) which included homeless, foster, and migrant students on the state's poverty index. The students enrolled in high school credit courses at WRMS consisted of 22.2 percent, in which 21.2 percent of the student population was served by gifted and talented programs. Therefore, WRMS allowed students not categorized as gifted and talented to be able to get credit for high school courses if they had the grades and MAP test scores to show they were capable of succeeding in the courses and on the End-of-Course (EOC) tests. WRMS students with learning disabilities population equated to 13.4 percent of the school population. The attendance rate of the students was 94.2 percent.

Of the 61 teachers at WRMS, 62.3 percent had advanced degrees, 68.9 percent were on continuing contracts, 81.8 percent of teachers returned from the previous year, and teacher attendance was at 95.4 percent. The student to teacher ratio in core subjects was 24.5 to one, and parents attending conferences was at 99.2 percent. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) actively raised money for the school, in which they funded making every classroom equipped with a Promethean Board, provided iPads for every teacher, and over the course of the last two years funded for each team of four core teachers to have a classroom set of iPads. Resources to the arts consisted of Band, Chorus, and Art. Students have limited choices of elective courses they can take, and the

courses are chosen for them by their guidance counselors. The books and electronic media in the library was on average 14 years old and wireless access per classroom is reported between 0-25 percent. Those numbers increased since the report due to the library receiving funds to get new books in, grants have been incorporated to purchase new books, and wireless access has been installed throughout the school.

State standardized tests, the ACT Aspire, indicate that WRMS scored as "exceeding and ready" on the following percentages: 70.3 percent on the English test, 37.4 percent on the Reading test, 35 percent on the Math test, and 32.2 percent on the Writing test. On the English, Reading, and Writing tests, WRMS scored above the statewide percentage of students "exceeding and ready," while their Math scores fell below the statewide percentage. While these numbers look good, the students in need of support are also higher in WRMS in comparison with other middle schools like us for all subject areas, which indicates our poverty rate impacts our state test scores.

Sample

A Grade 8 English Language Arts inclusion classroom at White Rose Middle School, consisting of students with behavioral infractions and students with learning disabilities, were used as the intervention group. The study began in the Fall of 2017 and was conducted over a 10-week period. Due to the inability to randomly select the sample of students, the researcher used convenience sampling for her sample study, which aligned with the collection of quantitative data. Her criterion of choice was the inclusion classroom for the intervention group based on the population of students who were identified with a learning disability and the population of ELL students assigned to the course. The researcher made her choices from four classes she was assigned: two grade 8

English Language Arts classrooms, one grade 8 English Language Arts inclusion classroom, and one English I Honors classroom. Bullying incidents occurred at higher rates in the inclusion classroom over the other three classrooms, and it had the population of students with learning disabilities that needed behavioral intervention strategies.

Historically, inclusion classrooms in both English Language Arts and Trans-Algebra have been populated by 45%-55% special education students. Due to this high population of special education students, difficulties with behavior exhibit incidents of bullying between the students were observed at a higher rate than the eighth grade English Language Arts classes without special education students. The special education students' learning disabilities were documented through individualized education plans (IEP), behavioral intervention plans (BIP), and 504 Plans. A 504 Plan is a blueprint for how a child will have access to learning in school if they have a disability that does not qualify them for an IEP but still interferes with the child's ability to learn. It was named for the federal civil rights law, Section 504 of the rehabilitation Act of 1973 to stop discrimination against people with disabilities. In addition to this population, the inclusion classroom was also populated with English language learners (ELL) that also had an IEP or BIP. An IEP is supported by the federal special education law for children with disabilities, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). A child with at least one of the thirteen specific disabilities covered by IDEA can qualify for an IEP, as long as that disability interferes with the child's ability to learn. It requires an educational evaluation in the school district to qualify a child for an IEP. A BIP is a behavior intervention plan that requires a plan of action, is written by an IEP team, and must have parent approval. It is a plan that provides strategies and goals for the student to meet as an intervention to

improve behavior. A functional behavior assessment is used with classroom observations to develop the plan. Frequently, students with IEPs who have Emotional Disturbance (ED) or receive frequent disciplinary actions also have BIPs attached to their IEP. Historically, the demographics of the inclusion classroom at WRMS was between 19-22 students with the following identifying factors: 12-13 males at 59%-63%, 7-9 females at 37%-41%, 14-16 Caucasian students at 63%-84%, 2-4 African American students at 11%-18%, 1-4 Hispanic/ELL students at 5%-18%, and 8-9 students classified with IEP/BIP/504 Plan at 36%-47%. WRMS also classified 74% of its student population to receive Free and Reduced Lunch, which placed the students in a school with high poverty rates.

Table 3.2
Demographics of Students in the Inclusion Classroom at White Rose Middle School

Year 1		
Category of student	Population	Percentage represented
Males	12 to 13 students	59% to 63%
Females	7 to 9 students	37% to 41%
Caucasian	14 to 16 students	63% to 84%
African American	2 to 4 students	11% to 18%
Hispanic/ELL	1 to 4 students	5% to 18%
IEP/BIP/504 Plan	8 to 9 students	36% to 47%

Note: 74% of the student population receive Free and Reduced Lunch

Year 2		
Category of student	Population	Percentage represented
Males	12 to 13 students	59% to 63%
Females	7 to 9 students	37% to 41%
Caucasian	14 to 16 students	63% to 84%
African American	2 to 5 students	11% to 23%
Hispanic/ELL	1 to 4 students	5% to 18%
IEP/BIP/504 Plan	8 to 11 students	36% to 50%

Note: 63% of the student population receive Free and Reduced Lunch

<div align="center">(continued)</div>

Table 3.2

Demographics of Students in the Inclusion Classroom at White Rose Middle School

Year 3		
Category of student	Population	Percentage represented
Males	TBD	TBD
Females	TBD	TBD
Caucasian	TBD	TBD
African American	TBD	TBD
Hispanic/ELL	TBD	TBD
IEP/BIP/504 Plan	TBD	TBD

Note: 67% of the student population receive Free and Reduced Lunch

Pilot Study

Two pilot studies were conducted on measurement tools created by the action researcher. The researcher discussed the validity and reliability of the bullying knowledge pre- and posttest and the pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior chart.

Bullying knowledge pre- and posttest. The bullying knowledge pre- and posttest was pilot tested in all of the researcher's classes the previous year to determine if it was a valid test. The test was developed directly from the initial class discussions and rules for the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© class lessons. The test questions were easily understood by students and did not show any issues preventing students from responding. These questions were created by the researcher who is an expert in her field and trained and certified by the district and school to conduct the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©.*

Pre- and post-observation on bullying behavior. The pre- and post-observation of bullying behaviors instrument was developed from behaviors seen in the inclusion classroom. The researcher, as an expert in her field, first developed the observation chart and pilot tested it in her classroom. She found no difficulty in using the chart. She then gave a copy of the chart to the special education co-teacher to evaluate and use. As an

expert in her field of special education, she found the chart to be accurate in the observed behaviors represented in the inclusion classroom.

Data Analysis

For this concurrent mixed methods design, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to determine the impact of the *OBPP©* on eighth grade students in the inclusion classroom at WRMS. A dependent-means t-test was used to calculate the understanding of bullying before and after the treatment phase for the inclusion classroom subjects receiving the treatment. A t-test is a parametrical statistical test used to see if there is a difference between the means of two samples, and to determine if the differences are significant. A dependent t-test was used to determine if there is a difference in mean before and after a study for a dependent sample, which would be the inclusion classroom convenience sample receiving the treatment.

Quantitative analysis. The study consisted of multiple collections of quantitative data that was compared to gain full insight to the study. Mertler (2014) defined triangulation as "a process of relating multiple sources of data in order to establish their trustworthiness or verification of the consistency of the facts while trying to account for their inherent biases" (p. 11). A one-group pretest-posttest design was used with the *OBPP©* to determine student knowledge of bullying before and after instruction in the inclusion classroom. The scores from the pre- and posttest were analyzed by finding the mean, median, and mode of the individual student and for the whole class. The researcher conducted a pre- and post-observation of student behavior to determine changes in student behavior and peer interaction. A pre- and post-questionnaire was given before

91

and after the intervention of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* lessons to determine students' perceptions of the rates and types of bullying they are experiencing.

At the end of the class lessons, the researcher incorporated Statcrunch, an online statistical software, to analyze quantitative data. This tool assisted the researcher in analyzing data quickly and efficiently, which shortened the analysis time and helped in calculating raw data. While the study cannot be generalized to the population, the study determined if there were significant differences in the results before and after the study to warrant the action research to be repeated for similar classrooms.

The quantitative data consisted of a bullying knowledge pre- and posttest that measured the students' knowledge of bullying, a pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior, and a pre- and post-questionnaire that measured the students' perceptions of bullying for the intervention group. A dependent t-test was conducted for the bullying knowledge pre- and posttest, the pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior, and the pre- and post-questionnaire on perceptions of bullying to measure whether there was a significant difference after the intervention.

Qualitative analysis. The intervention group received the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (*OBPP*)© classroom lessons in addition to the School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (SWPBIS) to determine if the *OBPP©* would have an impact on the behavior of students with learning disabilities. The 10 classroom lessons were recorded and transcribed, which provided qualitative data that was coded and analyzed to find patterns and themes.

Procedures

The procedures for the study followed the following table to determine the points of data collection, implementation of the intervention, and analyzation of the data collected during the research study. The research study began in August 2017 and continued until October 2017, to be analyzed and defended by April 2018.

Table 3.3

Procedures for Conducting the Action Research

Activities	Aug	Aug 18-22	Aug 23-28	Aug 30 - Oct 6	Oct 10-13	Oct 14- Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar- Apr
Determined when to start	X									
Chose the student groups to study	X									
Parent and Students permission forms distributed		▓								
Teacher Observation on Student Behavior			▓							
Olweus Bullying Questionnaire Given (Pre-Survey)			▓							
Bullying Pretest Given			▓							
Collecting Demographics Data			▓	▓						
Olweus Class Meetings				▓						
Collection on Discipline Data				▓	▓	▓				
Teacher Observation on Student Behavior					▓					
Bullying Posttest given					▓					
Olweus Bullying Questionnaire Given (Post-Survey)					▓					
Analysis of Collected Data						▓	▓			
Writing about the Results and Findings								▓	▓	
Dissertation Defense										▓

Rigor and Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stressed the importance of a study being trustworthy through validity and reliability in quantitative studies, and showing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative studies. The instruments used for quantitative data collection were valid measurements since they were used to measure what was intended to be measured in the study (Mertler, 2014). The researcher conducted a pilot test on measurements she created, determined she was an expert in her field, and trained to administer the OBPP. The researcher got a second opinion from a

special education teacher who was an expert in her field. From both of these pilot tests, the researcher determine that the measurements used for the study would qualify as valid instruments. Reliability is not an issue in action research studies, since teacher researchers should focus on the validity based on the instrument, and that if an instrument shows validity it is considered reliable (Mertler, 2014).

The action research study was credible since its goal is the search for a tangible reality of truth within the action research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher triangulated the data to obtain a clear picture of what is occurring in her classroom (Creswell, 2007). By triangulating measurements between the dependent-means t-test for the pre- and post-intervention measurements, the researcher searched for variables that show a relationship to the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© and bullying behavior. The researcher also searched for data that impacted the results of the study to determine the root cause of the behavior observed in the inclusion classroom. She obtained observational data while engaging with the groups over a 10-week period.

The transferability of the action research should result in other teachers at WRMS being able to implement the same study to improve their classroom environments. Lincoln and Guba (1985) determined that the original investigator may not know where their study may be applied, but those who apply it would know and should collect empirical evidence that supports the study to be applied. To make the study transferable, sufficient data and description was provided in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this action research study, the researcher described the study and how it was conducted with references to the components, which made it transferable to another classroom study.

The action research study incorporated strategies that made it dependable and confirmable. In the development of the action research study, the researcher shared her findings with her peers for feedback on the data and findings of the action research study (Creswell, 2007). The researcher continued to remain aware of her own bias as the research developed and provided reflections on her own bias through keeping an audit of her reflections through an online journal (Creswell, 2007). The researcher provided a rich description of the study that she continued to develop through the progression of the research (Creswell, 2007).

Positionality

The researcher's role in the action research study was as the inclusion classroom teacher for eighth-grade English Language Arts that served as an active participant in the concurrent mixed methods design implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* to determine if there is a short-term impact on behavior. As a participant, she documented the behaviors of students in the inclusion classroom to determine a baseline for behavior. The researcher conducted the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire to the students to document their perceptions towards bullying before conducting the lessons. Then she served as an active participant in the role of moderator during the *OBPP©* lessons to help guide students through the process of understanding the four rules to prevent bullying. After the implementation of the lessons, she observed and documented behaviors after implementing the program to determine if there was a change in student behavior.

The *OBPP©* lessons were incorporated into classroom instruction for the study group, which placed the researcher as both moderator and as teacher-participant, since the lessons were constructed as a Socrative seminar.

Ethical Considerations.

Ethical considerations first and foremost must protect the students and families involved in the research study. Many of the students in the inclusion classroom at White Rose Middle received accommodations based on special educational needs. Due to this, their identities must be concealed in order to prevent future negative impacts in their education based on data collected in the research. The goal in this research was to positively impact the needs of the students, and therefore undesirable results were perceived as not having a positive impact on all the students involved. According to Mertler (2014), "The principle of beneficence states that research should be done in order to acquire knowledge about human beings and the educational process; in other words, it should benefit someone or some group of people" (p. 112). Therefore, unless the research discovered benefits to the educational process and environment of the students involved, the findings will result in reevaluating and revising if the research failed to positively affect the students.

In addition to concealing the identity of the students involved, White Rose Middle's actual name was concealed to protect the school's and school district's identity since it is the only middle school for 7th and 8th grade students in the district. Another reason for confidentiality of student identities revolved around the National Education Association's Code of Ethics, to which the researcher is bound as a teacher member. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) cited the 2013 NEA Code of Ethics that states:

The educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being,

recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to

excellence, and the nurture of the democratic principles. Essential to these

goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee

of equal educational opportunity for all. The educator accepts the

responsibility to adhere to the highest standards. (p. 148)

Due to the research being conducted for helping the classroom environment, all students

in the studied classroom were instructed together as equals in the *Olweus Bullying*

Prevention Program©. Although some students and their parents opted out of being used

in the study, the instruction in the classroom remained equal and the findings for

participants were used without singling out their participation in the study or providing

special instruction that made them different in the perception of their peers. To determine

who participated, parental consent forms and student assent forms were incorporated, as

directed by the principal of White Rose Middle. Before finalizing the research, the

principal read through the plan and approved the research. They determined together that

the plan should be approved by the district office to determine if other steps need to be

taken in order to keep the identities of students identified as receiving special education

confidential. The plan was approved by the district.

While confidentiality of students with disabilities is necessary, further ethical

issues stemming from the practices of educators and leaders in special education continue

to arise as a concern for the research. According to Bon and Bigbee (2011), special

education leaders find conflicts between adhering to legal compliances, administrative

policies, and their professional code of ethics. (p. 324) They stated that "laws are

enforceable and establish mandatory obligations, but ethics are informal standards of conduct that encourage ideal dispositions" in order to define the differences between federal laws like, The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. (Bon and Bigbee, 2011, p. 325) The ethical concern is that many educational leaders, special education instructors, and general education instructors confuse their ethical decisions with the mandates determined by these laws. Bon and Bigbee (2011) found that special education leaders misinterpreted the differences between legal mandates and professional ethics when they stated, "a majority of the special education leaders referenced laws and legal compliance as if these were interchangeable with, or the primary source of, professional codes of ethics in special education" (p. 346). In order to address this concern, ethical decisions for the action research in the inclusion classroom will be discussed separately from the federal regulations and mandates necessary for the study and to insure the research remains student centered.

Pazey (1993) addressed the dilemmas of ethics and morals in special education when the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was first passed alongside the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. She stated that the issue revolved around the influences from business models and stated, "*Challenges for School Leaders* (American Association of School Administrators, 1998) addresses leadership issues in the educational field and compares them to recommendations that have been developed by corporate America" (Pazey, 1993, p. 3-4). This influence created ethical and moral dilemmas for administrators in schools, and specifically in special education, since it increased the assignments of students from diverse backgrounds within the special

education classroom. Due to the change in laws, administrators found themselves pulled between adhering to the federal mandates while also establishing ethical practices in their schools. Administrators and school leaders still function under the impact of the federal mandates and influences of corporate America. They are required to produce data driven evidence of improvement through test scores with all the populations in the school for federal funding while also finding ways to put the needs of the students first. Therefore, quantitative data collection on the students in the inclusion classroom through test scores and assignments to behavioral intervention provided points of interest that could show the effects of classroom environment, but other qualitative data on the perspective of the students and faculty were equally considered for the effects of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* on the classroom environment. By addressing both forms of data, mandated laws and professional ethics, a clearer picture revealed whether the program had a positive effect.

Conclusion

The purpose of this Action Research study is to determine if the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* helped students with learning disabilities and their non-disabled peers understand each other better and promote a healthy classroom environment. The research question being asked was: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled?" In this concurrent mixed-methods study, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative data to triangulate the impact of the *OBPP©* lessons. The researcher provided detailed descriptions of the research site and the sample she chose for her study. She discussed the instruments she used, the methods she incorporated, and

provided a justification for researcher created instruments. Additionally, the researcher

analyzed the data she collected and provided the procedures used to conduct the study.

After completed, the researcher reflected and shared her findings with fellow teachers

and the academic community at large.

CHAPTER 4

ACTION RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The varying types of students placed within the inclusion classroom in White Rose Middle School (WRMS) impacts the behavior in the environment. Additionally, the practice of placing students in a singular inclusion classroom, where 45-55% of the classroom population needs special education or English as a Second Language services, increases student frustration in learning and results in disruptions in the classroom environment. The participants described in Chapter 3 illustrated the differences in their demographics as students in the inclusion classroom at WRMS.

To address the differences of students with learning disabilities, to improve the understanding of their peers, and to decrease the classroom disruptions that lead to disciplinary consequences, the researcher conducted an intervention using the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program© (OBPP©).* The curriculum from the intervention uses communication and experience as foundational models to improve student behavior and to teach bullying prevention strategies. Dewey (1938) suggested that positive experiences help students overcome the obstacles they face in learning in the classroom and in life (38). The researcher applied the *OBPP©* and the ideal of Dewey's progressivism to determine if there would be an impact on the behavior of students in the inclusion classroom and a decrease in experiencing bullying.

Description of Data Collection

The data collection consisted of a pre- and post-test on bullying knowledge, pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior, and a pre- and post-questionnaire on student perceptions of bullying, called the "Olweus Bullying Questionnaire", field notes on student attitudes, and discipline data collection. The researcher prepared for beginning the data collection process during the first week of September. The data was collected over the course of 10 weeks. First, students were given a 10-question pre-test on their understanding of bullying. The next step consisted of conducting a pre-observation of bullying behavior in the intervention class for a period of two days. The following day they were given the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire on their perceptions about bullying, which served as a pre-survey before the intervention.

The lessons and treatment of the Olweus Lessons on the "Four Rules of Bullying" were first conducted with the intervention class. These lessons were conducted during the first two weeks of the intervention. After the first four lessons were completed over the course of two weeks, the intervention continued with lessons and activities from the Olweus text, *Class Meetings that Matter for grades 6-8*. Eight lessons were conducted in the intervention. These lessons consisted of topics on getting to know their peers, empathy, developing identity, and communication. Field notes were kept during the period of the class instruction for the intervention group. The purpose for collecting qualitative data was to document students' reactions to the *OBPP©*. The class meetings were also audio-recorded for qualitative data. After completing a total of 10 class lessons over a period of eight weeks, the intervention group was observed again with the post-observation of bullying behavior. They were given the bullying knowledge posttest to

determine their understanding after the treatment period. They were also give the Olweus

Bullying Questionnaire post-questionnaire to determine if their perceptions and

experiences with bullying issues had changed after the intervention.

At the end of the class lessons, the researcher began incorporating Statcrunch, an

online statistical software, to analyze quantitative data. Then she sent the recordings of

the class meetings to a transcription service company for transcripts of the lessons with

the intervention group. These tools assisted the researcher in analyzing data quickly and

efficiently, which shortened the analysis time and helped in calculating raw data.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data consisted of a bullying knowledge pre- and posttest that

measured the students' knowledge of bullying, a pre- and post-observation of bullying

behavior, and a pre- and post-questionnaire that measured the students' perceptions of

bullying for the intervention group. A dependent t-test was conducted for the bullying

knowledge pre- and posttest, the pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior, and the

pre- and post-questionnaire on perceptions of bullying to measure whether there was a

significant difference after the intervention. The intervention group received the *Olweus*

Bullying Prevention Program (*OBPP*)© in addition to the School-wide Positive Behavior

Intervention Support (SWPBIS) to determine if the *OBPP©* would have an impact on the

behavior of students with learning disabilities.

Bullying knowledge. The bullying knowledge pre- and posttest was a researcher-

created assessment used to determine student understanding of bullying before and after

the intervention. It consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions that assessed each student's

understanding of the definition of bullying and identifying bullying. It asked questions

about the percentage of students bullied in South Carolina schools, the types of bullying the different genders participate in, and the causes of bullying. It assessed the characteristics of bullies, victims, and bystanders. Below and in Table 4.1 is a presentation of the bullying knowledge pre- and posttest means scores, the increases and decreases for each question, and the results of a dependent samples t-test comparing the pretest to posttest results of the intervention group.

Intervention pre- and posttest results. The intervention group, consisting of 15 students, showed a pretest mean of 51.88 ($SD = 15.59$) out of 100. After 10 weeks of the intervention, the group showed a posttest mean of 44.38 ($SD = 15.90$) out of 100 (Table 4.1). The intervention group's mean score decreased by 7.5, which indicated a decrease in knowledge after the intervention.

Table 4.1

Means for the Bullying Pre-Test to Post-Test for the Intervention Group

Group	Number of Students	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Difference
Intervention	15	51.88	44.38	7.5

Three questions show an increase in knowledge from the pre- to posttest, indicating positive shifts in understanding. The individual means and difference in means between the pretest and posttest for each of these questions are shown below and in Table 4.2.

- "What is bullying?" showed that students gained an understanding of defining bullying from the pretest ($M=87.5$, $SD=34.16$) to the posttest ($M=100$, $SD=0$), which had a difference in means of 12.5.

- "How often do you believe students are bullied in schools in South Carolina?" showed that students gained an understanding of bullying occurrences from the pretest (M=31.25, SD=47.87) to the posttest (M=37.5, SD=50), with a difference in means of 6.25.
- "What ways are students affected by bullying?" showed an increase in understanding from the pretest (M=12.5, SD=34.16) to the posttest (M=31.25, SD=47.87) with a difference in means of 18.75, suggesting that students are beginning to gain an understanding of the different types of bullying they witness.

The increases in understanding suggest the students are developing their ability to accurately define bullying when they see it. They understand the frequency of bullying in schools, which suggests they are more aware of its occurrence in their school. They are also able to understand the impact bullying has on their peers. These increases in understanding build a foundation for bullying awareness.

Seven questions showed a decrease in knowledge from the pre- to posttest, indicating negative shifts in understanding. The individual means and difference in means between the pretest and posttest for each of these questions are shown below and in Table 4.2.

- "Which of the following are indirect forms of bullying?" showed a decrease from the pretest (M=87.5, SD=34.16) to the posttest (M=75, SD=44.72) with a difference in means of -12.5.
- "How often do students participate in bullying?" showed a decrease from the pretest (M=18.75, SD=40.31) to the posttest (M=12.5, SD=34.16) with a difference in means of -6.25.

- "Which is the type of bullying that both girls and boys participate in?" showed a decrease from the pretest (M=56.25, SD=51.24) to the posttest (M=50.00, SD=51.64) with a difference in means of -6.25.

- "What are the causes of bullying problems in school?" decreased from the pretest (M=87.5, SD=34.15) to the posttest (M=56.25, SD=51.23) with a difference in means of -31.25.

- "What are the four types of students who tend to be bullied?" also showed a decrease in understanding from the pretest (M=37.5, SD=50) to the posttest (M=25, SD=44.72) with a difference in means of -12.5.

- "What is not a characteristic of students who bully?" continued to show a lack of understanding from the pretest (M=18.75, SD=40.31) to the posttest (M=6.25, SD=25) with a difference in means of -12.5.

- "Which is not a myth of bullying?" showed a decrease in understanding from the pretest (M=75, SD=44.72) to the posttest (M=50, SD=51.64) with a difference in means of -25.

The decrease in knowledge suggests the students are not able to identify indirect forms of bullying, complex reasons bullying occurs, and the students who receive bullying after receiving the intervention. Their largest decreases in knowledge occur in the causes of bullying in schools and the myths of bullying, which suggests they are more likely to believe inaccurate claims about bullying. Additionally, they showed a decrease in understanding who is bullied and identifying indirect bullying, which suggests they have difficulty recognizing differences in bullying actions that do not lead to physical aggression.

Table 4.2

Pretest – Posttest Question Means for Intervention Group

Questions	Mean of Pre-Test Questions	Mean of Post-Test Questions	Difference of means from pre- to post-test
Increases in Understanding			
What is bullying?	87.5	100	12.5
How often do you believe students are bullied in schools in South Carolina?	31.25	37.5	6.25
What ways are students affected by bullying?	12.5	31.25	18.75
Decreases in Understanding			
Which of the following are indirect forms of bullying?	87.5	75	-12.5
How often do students participate in bullying?	18.75	12.5	-6.25
Which is the type of bullying that both girls and boys participate in?	56.25	50	-6.25
What are the causes of bullying problems in schools?	87.5	56.25	-31.25
What are the four types of students who tend to be bullied?	37.5	25	-12.5
What is not a characteristic of students who bully?	18.75	6.25	-12.5
Which is not a myth of bullying?	75	50	-25

The increases in understanding from the bullying knowledge pretest to posttest suggest the students are better able to define bullying and the ways students are impacted by bullying. The decreases in understanding suggest they are not showing an ability to identify bullying in their environment, especially if the bullying is discreet. The decreases suggest they believe inaccuracies about bullying and that they did not gain an understanding after the intervention.

Dependent samples t-test results. A dependent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the knowledge on bullying of the intervention group in the pre-test and the post-test conditions. There was not a significant difference in the scores for the 15 students in

the pre-test (*M*=51.88, *SD*=15.59) and post-test (*M*=44.38, *SD*=15.90) conditions; $t(15) =$ 1.36, $p = 0.19$, shown below and in Table 4.3. This result suggests the intervention had no impact on the students' knowledge of bullying from the pretest to posttest.

Table 4.3

Dependent t-Test for Pretest-Posttest for Intervention

Hypothesis test results:

Difference	Mean	Std. Err.	N	DF	T-Stat	P-value
Pretest - Posttest	7.5	5.52	15	15	1.36	0.19

The result from the dependent t-test supports the differences found in each question from the pretest to the posttest. The students did not gain in knowledge from the pretest to the posttest, suggesting they do not recognize bullying in their environment and do not understand the definition of bullying after 10 weeks of the intervention.

Bullying behavior. The pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior consisted of eight categories. The researcher used the observation of bullying behavior to determine if there was a difference in behavior for the intervention group between the pre- and post-observation. The observation of bullying behavior consisted of behavioral characteristics that were positive interactions with peers and some that were negative interactions with peers. Each behavior was charted between one and five, one for a behavior occurring less frequently and five for a behavior occurring more frequently with ranges of behavior between. Below is a presentation of the pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior means scores, the increases and decreases for each characteristic, and the results of a dependent samples t-test comparing the pre-observation to post-observation results of the intervention group.

Intervention pre- and post-observation results. The intervention group, consisting of 15 students, showed a pre-observation mean of 16.88 (*SD* = 1.86) out of 45

possible points. After 10 weeks of the intervention, the group showed a post-observation

mean of 17.06 (SD = 2.59) out of 45 possible points (see Table 4.4). The intervention

group's mean score increased by 0.18, which indicated that they showed a minimal

increase in behaviors after receiving the intervention.

Table 4.4
Means for the Pre-Observation to Post-Observation of Bullying Behavior for the
Intervention Group

Group	Number of Students	Pre-Observation Mean	Post-Observation Mean	Difference
Intervention	15	16.88	17.06	0.18

      The intervention group exhibited increases in negative behaviors in four

characteristics from the pre-observation and post-observation, also shown in Table 4.5:

- "Quiet and withdrawn" increased from the pre-observation (M=1.88, SD=1.31) to

  the post-observation (M=2.13, SD=1.41) with a difference in means of 0.25.

- "Complains of illness" increased from the pre-observation (M=1.00, SD=0) to the

  post-observation (M=1.19, SD=0.54) with a difference in means of 0.19.

- "Blames others" increased from the pre-observation (M=1.44, SD=0.89) to the

  post-observation (M=1.63, SD=1.26) with a difference in means of 0.19.

- "Impulsive actions" increased from the pre-observation (M=1.38, SD=0.89) to the

  post-observation (M=1.69, SD=1.49) with a difference in means of 0.31.

The increase of negative behaviors suggests that the students became more likely to

disrupt the environment in class after the intervention. The goal of the *OBPP©* lessons is

to get students comfortable with communicating so they will report and stand up to

bullying. For the students, the impact of the lessons resulted in students either

communicating less or students disrupting the classroom environment.

The intervention group also showed decreases in positive behaviors in three characteristics from the pre-observation to the post-observation of bullying behavior, also shown in Table 4.5.

- "Relates well to peers" showed a decrease from the pre-observation (*M*=4.63, *SD*=0.62) to the post-observation (*M*=4.19, *SD*=1.05) with a difference in means of -0.44.

- "Self-Confident" showed a decrease in behavior from the pre-observation (*M*=4.25, *SD*=1.06) to the post-observation (*M*=4.06, *SD*=1.12) with a difference in means of -.018.

The decrease in positive behavior suggests the intervention impacted students negatively. Their communication during the lessons carried over into the classroom environment, which caused the students to respond to each other negatively. Their self-confidence levels decreasing related to the required level of work in the classroom increasing.

The intervention group exhibited one characteristic that showed a decrease in negative behavior from the pre-observation to the post-observation of bullying behavior, also shown in Table 4.5.

- "Aggressive Towards Peers" showed a decrease in behavior from the pre-observation (*M*=1.31, *SD*=0.70) to the post-observation (*M*=1.19, *SD*=0.54) with a difference in means of -0.13.

The decrease in aggression was a positive impact on the class environment. The *OBPP©* lessons addressed aggression towards peers, therefore the decrease suggests the intervention positively impacted this behavioral characteristic.

Table 4.5

Pre-Observation – Post-Observation of Bullying Behaviors for Intervention Group

Behaviors	Mean of Pre-Observation Behavior	Mean of Post-Observation Behavior	Difference of means from Pre- to Post-Observation Behaviors
Increases in Behavior			
Quiet and Withdrawn	1.88	2.13	0.25
Complains of Illness	1.00	1.19	0.19
Blames Others	1.44	1.63	0.19
Impulsive Actions	1.38	1.69	0.31
Decreases in Behavior			
Relates Well to Peers	4.63	4.19	-0.44
Self-Confident	4.25	4.07	-0.18
Aggressive Towards Peers	1.32	1.19	-0.13
No Changes in Behavior			
Lack of Empathy	1.00	1.00	0

The students exhibited increases in negative behaviors from the pre-observation to the post-observation of bullying behaviors. Students showed an increase in blaming others in the intervention lessons and showed an increase in students' willingness to report behaviors they do not see as appropriate. The behavior was reported as negative since the students were blaming their peers for something they had done themselves, so they did not apply the intervention lessons accurately. The students showed an increase in impulsive actions, which negatively impacted the classroom environment. They became quieter and withdrawn because of the increase in other negative behaviors in the group. Additionally, students complained more of illnesses.

Students in the intervention group also showed decreases in behavior. Their ability to relate well to their peers decreased, which negatively impacted their classroom interactions. Their level of self-confidence decreased after the 10-week intervention, which also occurred right after students received their first report cards of the year.

Grades on their report cards could have been the negative impact on their self-confidence that was observed in the post-observation of bullying behavior. Yet, their aggression towards their peers showed a decrease in behavioral characteristics, which was a decrease in bullying behavior after receiving the *OBPP©* lessons during the intervention. Aggression was addressed in the lessons on bullying, therefore the intervention may have had a direct impact on the decreases in their aggression towards their peers.

Dependent samples t-test results. A dependent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the behavior of the intervention group from the pre-observation to the post-observation conditions. There was not a significant difference in the scores for the pre-observation (*M*=16.88, *SD*=1.86) and post-observation (*M*=17.06, *SD*=2.59) conditions; *t*(15)= -0.36, *p* = 0.72, shown below and in Table 4.6. These results suggest that the pre-observation and the post-observation of bullying behavior intervention had no impact on student behavior.

Table 4.6
Dependent t-Test for Pre- and Post-Observation of Bullying Behavior for the Intervention Group

Hypothesis test results:						
Difference	Mean	Std. Err.	N	DF	T-Stat	P-value
Pretest - Posttest	-0.188	0.52	15	15	-0.36	0.72

The *OBPP©* intervention resulted in not having an overall impact on student behavior. The students' characteristic behaviors were not different after receiving the intervention for 10 weeks, therefore the individual increases and decreases previously documented were not a result of the intervention impacting their behavior.

Perceptions of Bullying. The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire consisted of 40 Likert-type scale questions that asked students their perceptions of bullying within their school. The questions addressed their ability to recognize bullying, their experiences with

bullying, and their involvement in bullying. The questionnaire was used to determine if there were changes in perception for the intervention group before and after receiving the intervention. The Olweus Bullying pre- and post-questionnaire on perceptions of bullying means scores, the increases and decreases for each question, and the results of a dependent samples t-test comparing the pre-questionnaire to post-questionnaire results of the intervention group are noted in Table 4.7.

Intervention pre- and post-questionnaire results. The intervention group, consisting of 15 students, showed a pre-questionnaire mean of 62.67 ($SD = 16.73$) out of a possible 213 points (Table 4.7). After 10 weeks of the intervention, the group showed a post-questionnaire mean of 63.67 ($SD = 14.68$). The intervention group's mean score decreased by 1.0, which indicated that there was no change in perception after 10 weeks of the intervention.

Table 4.7
Means for the Pre-Questionnaire – Post-Questionnaire on Perceptions of Bullying for Intervention Group

Group	Number of students	Pre-Questionnaire Mean	Post- Questionnaire Mean	Difference
Intervention	15	62.67	63.67	1.00

Seven questions showed positive shifts in perception from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire. The individual means and difference in means between the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire for each of these questions are shown below and in Table 4.8.

- "How do you like school?" showed that students increased in their perception towards liking school from the pre-questionnaire ($M=3.00$, $SD=1.87$) to the post-questionnaire ($M=3.27$, $SD=1.41$), which had a difference in means of 0.27.

113

- "Have you told anyone that you have been bullied in the past couple of months?" showed that students increased their perceived rate of telling someone that they have been bullied from the pre-questionnaire ($M=1.50$, $SD=0.71$) to the post-questionnaire ($M=3.00$, $SD=1.41$), which had a difference in means of 1.50. The accompanying question, "Who have you told?", also showed an increase in perceptions of who they told from the pre-questionnaire ($M=0.50$, $SD=0.55$) to the post-questionnaire ($M=0.83$, $SD=1.17$), with a difference in means of 0.33.

- "How often do other students try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?" showed an increase of students perceiving they take actions to stop bullying in their school from the pre-questionnaire ($M=2.80$, $SD=$) to the post-questionnaire ($M=3.00$, $SD=$), with a difference in means of 0.20.

- "When you see a student your age being bullied at school, what do you feel or think?" showed an increase in students perceiving they show empathy from the pre-questionnaire ($M=3.00$, $SD=4.69$) to the post-questionnaire ($M=3.75$, $SD=4.5$), with a difference in means of 0.75.

- "I bullied him or her in another way," showed a decrease in perceived bullying in the students from the pre-questionnaire ($M=3.00$, $SD=6.16$) to the post-questionnaire ($M=2.80$, $SD=5.72$), with a difference in means of -0.20.

- "Do you think you could join in bullying a student whom you do not like?" showed a decrease in perceived bullying participation in the students from the pre-questionnaire ($M=2.50$, $SD=3.08$) to the post-questionnaire ($M=2.33$, $SD=2.07$), with a difference in means of -0.17.

- "How often are you afraid of being bullied by other students in your school?" showed a decrease in students perceived fear of being bullied in school from the pre-questionnaire (*M*=2.50, *SD*=4.23) to the post-questionnaire (*M*=2.33, *SD*=3.83), with a difference in means of -0.17.

The increases in a positive perception on the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire showed that students in the intervention are changing their perceptions of bullying behaviors occurring in school. They are reporting bullying more, trying to stop bullying, and have more empathy for their peers. Additionally, they perceive that they are decreasing their bullying of others, they are not participating in bullying as frequently, and they do not fear being bullied as much. While their increases in positive perceptions were minimal, the changes of their perceptions towards improving their own actions is a step in the right direction.

Twelve questions showed negative shifts in perception for the intervention group. The individual means and difference in means between the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire on student perceptions of bullying for each of these questions is shown below and in Table 4.8:

- "I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way," showed an increase in students perceiving they are receiving verbal forms of bullying in school from the pre-questionnaire (*M*=2.80, *SD*=4.15) to the post-questionnaire (*M*=3.00, *SD*=4.06), with a difference in means of 0.20.
- "I was bullied with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on my cell phone or over the Internet (computer)," with its accompanying question, "If you were bullied on your cell phone or over the Internet, how was it

115

done?" showed an increase of students perceiving they are experiencing cyber bullying incidents on both the cell phone and the internet from the pre-questionnaire (*M*=0.33, *SD*=0.58) to the post-questionnaire (*M*=1.00, *SD*=1.00), with a difference in means of 0.67.

- "In which class(es) is the student or students who bully you?" showed an increase of students perceiving they are experiencing bullying from their peers in different classes and from peers in higher grades from the pre-questionnaire (*M*=0.60, *SD*=0.55) to the post-questionnaire (*M*=1.60, *SD*=1.52), with a difference in means of 1.00.

- "Have you been bullied by boys or girls?" showed an increase in the perceived incidents of males participating in bullying, while the females remained constant, from the pre-questionnaire (*M*=2.00, *SD*=0.84) to the post-questionnaire (*M*=2.60, *SD*=1.41), with a difference in means of 0.60.

- "By how many students have you usually been bullied?" showed an increase of students perceiving they are experiencing bullying from multiple peers from the pre-questionnaire (*M*=1.00, *SD*=4.57) to the post-questionnaire (*M*=1.40, *SD*=4.03), with a difference in means of 0.40.

- "How long has the bullying lasted?" showed an increase in the perceived duration of students bullied from the pre-questionnaire (*M*=1.00, *SD*=1.41) to the post-questionnaire (*M*=1.20, *SD*=1.79), with a difference in means of 0.20.

- "Where have you been bullied?" showed an increase in the perceived places students are bullied from the pre-questionnaire (*M*=0.55, *SD*=0.82) to the post-questionnaire (*M*=1.45, *SD*=0.82), with a difference in means of 0.90.

- "How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?" showed an increase in students perceiving that they are participating in bullying from the pre-questionnaire (M=2.80, SD=5.22) to the post-questionnaire (M=3.00, SD=4.64), with a difference in means of 0.20.

- "I hit, kicked, pushed, and shoved him or her around, or locked him or her indoors," showed an increase in perceived violence towards other students from the pre-questionnaire (M=3.00, SD=6.71) to the post-questionnaire (M=3.40, SD=6.71), with a difference in means of 0.40.

- "Has your class or homeroom teacher or any other teacher talked with you about your bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?" showed a decrease in perceived communication between teachers and students about bullying their peers from the pre-questionnaire (M=3.75, SD=7.50) to the post-questionnaire (M=3.25, SD=5.25), with a difference in means of -0.50.

- "Has any adult at home talked with you about your bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?" showed a decrease in perceived communication between parents and guardians with their student about bullying a peer at school from the pre-questionnaire (M=3.75, SD=7.50) to the post-questionnaire (M=3.00, SD=4.69), with a difference in means of -0.75.

- "Overall, how much do you think your class or homeroom teacher has done to cut down on bullying in your classroom in the past couple of months?" showed a decrease in students perceiving that their teacher has attempted to decrease bullying from the pre-questionnaire (M=3.20, SD=1.79) to the post-questionnaire (M=2.80. SD=1.79), with a difference in means of -0.40.

The increase in negative perceptions towards bullying on the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire revealed that students are continuing to experience bullying from their peers. The findings showed an increase perception in receiving verbal bullying, cyber bullying, bullying in school from peers, and a perceived increase in the duration of the bullying and the places it is occurring in the school. These results suggest that while students can take control of their own actions, they still perceive that they experience the negative behaviors from students in the school. They also stated they perceive a decrease in communicating and reporting bullying to their teachers and their parents, while also thinking their teachers are doing less about bullying in the classroom. The decrease in telling their teachers and parents about bullying impacted their perception that teachers are doing less about bullying, since if the bullying is not reported the teacher may not know there is a problem.

The rest of the questions in the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire indicated that there was no change in perception from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire.

Table 4.8

Pre-Questionnaire – Post-Questionnaire Perceptions on the Occurrences of Bullying in the School for the Intervention Group

Olweus Bullying Questionnaire -- questions	Mean of Pre-Questionnaire Perceptions	Mean of Post-Questionnaire Perceptions	Difference of means from Pre- to Post-Questionnaire Perceptions
Positive Shifts in Perceptions			
How do you like school?	3.00	3.27	0.27
Have you told anyone that you have been bullied in the past couple of months?	1.50	3.00	1.50
Who have you told?	0.50	0.83	0.33

(continued)

118

Table 4.8

Pre-Questionnaire – Post-Questionnaire Perceptions on the Occurrences of Bullying in the School for the Intervention Group

How often do other students try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?	2.80	3.00	0.20
When you see a student your age being bullied at school, what do you feel or think?	3.00	3.75	0.75
I bullied him or her in another way.	3.00	2.80	-.20
Do you think you could join in bullying a student whom you do not like?	2.50	2.33	-0.17
How often are you afraid of being bullied by other students in your school?	2.50	2.33	-0.17
Negative Shifts in Perceptions			
I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way.	2.8	3	0.20
I was bullied with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on my cell phone or over the Internet (computer).	3.00	3.00	0.00
If you were bullied on your cell phone or over the Internet, how was it done?	0.33	1.00	0.67
In which class(es) is the student or students who bully you?	0.60	1.60	1.00
Have you been bullied by boys or girls?	2.00	2.60	0.60
By how many students have you usually been bullied?	1.00	1.40	0.40
How long has the bullying lasted?	1.00	1.20	0.20
Where have you been bullied?	0.55	1.45	0.90
How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?	2.80	3.00	0.20

(continued)

Table 4.8

Pre-Questionnaire – Post-Questionnaire Perceptions on the Occurrences of Bullying in the School for the Intervention Group

I hit, kicked, pushed, and shoved him or her around, or locked him or her indoors.	3.00	3.40	0.40
Has your class or homeroom teacher or any other teacher talked with you about your bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months? Computational basis: Those who bullied "2-3 times a month" or more according to question 25.	3.75	3.25	-0.50
Has any adult at home talked with you about your bullying another student(s) at school in the the past couple of months? Computational basis: Those who bullied "2-3 times a month" or more according to question 25.	3.75	3.00	-0.75
Overall, how much do you think your class or homeroom teacher has done to cut down on bullying in your classroom in the past couple of months?	3.20	2.80	-0.40
No Changes in Perceptions			
How many good friends do you have in your class(es)?	3.00	3.00	0.00
How often have you been bullied in school in the past couple months?	3.00	3.00	0.00
Other students left me out of things on purpose, excluded me from their group of friends, or completely ignored me.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I was hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors.	3.00	3.00	0.00
Other students told lies or spread false rumors about me and tried to make others dislike me.	3.00	3.00	0.00

(continued)

Table 4.8

Pre-Questionnaire – Post-Questionnaire Perceptions on the Occurrences of Bullying in the School for the Intervention Group

I had money or other things taken away from me or damaged.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I was threatened or forced to do things I did not want to do.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I was bullied with mean names or comments about my race or color.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I was bullied with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I was bullied in another way.	3.00	3.00	0.00
How often do teachers or other adults at school try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?	2.80	2.80	0.00
Has any adult at home contacted the school to try to stop your being bullied at school in the past couple of months?	3.25	3.25	0.00
I called another student(s) mean names and made fun of or teased him or her in a hurtful way.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I kept him or her out of things on purpose, excluded him or her from my group of friends, or completely ignored him or her.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I spread false rumors about him or her and tried to make others dislike him or her.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I took money or other things from him or her or damaged his or her belongings.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I threatened or forced him or her to do things he or she did not want to do.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I bullied him or her with mean names or comments about his or her race or color.	3.00	3.00	0.00
I bullied him or her with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning.	3.00	3.00	0.00

(continued)

Table 4.8
Pre-Questionnaire – Post-Questionnaire Perceptions on the Occurrences of Bullying in the School for the Intervention Group

I bullied him or her with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on my cell phone or over the Internet (computer).	3.00	3.00	0.00
If you bullied another student(s) on your cell phone or over the Internet (computer), how was it done? Computational basis: Those who bullied "once or twice" or more according to question 33a.	0.00	0.00	0.00
How do you usually react if you see or learn that a student your age is being bullied by another student(s)?	2.50	2.50	0.00

The increases in positive perceptions of bullying from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire suggests that students are working on changing their own behavior towards bullying and are beginning to take responsibility for their roles in preventing bullying. The increases in negative perceptions of bullying from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire suggests that students are still experiencing bullying from their peers, which are outside forces they cannot control.   An important preventative measure to prevent bullying in schools includes reporting bullying incidents to two adults, an adult in the school setting and an adult at home. The results also indicated that students are not reporting bullying to their teachers and parents as necessary to contribute to preventing bullying in their environment.

Dependent samples t-test results. A dependent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the students' perceptions of bullying from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire conditions. There was not a significant difference in the scores for the 15

students in the pre-questionnaire (*M*=62.67, *SD*=16.73) and the post-questionnaire

(*M*=63.67, *SD*=14.68) conditions; *t*(14) = -0.18, *p* = 0.86, shown below and in Table 4.9.

These results suggested that the perception of bullying for the intervention group showed

no significant difference between the Olweus Bullying pre- and post-questionnaire.

Table 4.9

Dependent t-Test for Pre- and Post-Questionnaire of Perceptions for the Intervention Group

Hypothesis test results:

Difference	Mean	Std. Err.	N	DF	T-Stat	P-value
Pretest - Posttest	-1.00	5.43	15	14	-0.18	0.86

   The result from the dependent t-test supports the differences found in the

questions from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire. The students did not show

a significant change in perceptions from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire.

This suggests that the minimal changes are not due to an impact from the intervention

lessons.

Qualitative Data Analysis

   The qualitative data consisted of an intervention that involved 10 lessons that

included audio-recorded discussions in the classroom setting. Each recorded discussion

was transcribed using an online transcription. The transcripts were then coded and

analyzed to find patterns and themes. Similar codes were grouped into patterns and

similar patterns formed the themes (Saldaña, 2009). Students were given pseudonyms to

protect their identities in reporting their responses.

   The themes that emerged in the quantitative analysis were conceptualizing

bullying, beliefs about bullying, reporting bullying, the interplay of friendships and

bullying, developing empathy, showing courage, and presenting one's image to peers.

Conceptualizing bullying addressed the development towards understanding bullying and responding appropriately to it. Beliefs about bullying discussed the students' reactions to bullying and their concerns to defend themselves. Reporting bullying revealed the students' responses to letting adults know about bullying incidents in school. Interplay of friendships and bullying discussed the value of friendships and the impact of being different in school. Developing empathy focused on the process of students attempting to understand their peers. Showing courage illustrated the moments students believed they needed to have courage to prevent bullying. Presenting one's image to peers addressed how students hide behind an identity mask to control how others perceive them. A conclusion section was presented to show the difficulty students had with becoming vulnerable with their peers, while they were able to communicate their emotions to the researcher.

Conceptualizing bullying. The theme addressed students gaining an understanding of what bullying is and how to appropriately respond to bullying. Patterns within this theme included defining bullying and the impact bullying has on a student. The students discussed their understanding of bullying to develop a definition.

In the first few classroom lessons, the students focused on how they defined bullying and what that meant specifically in their school. This addressed whether they understood what bullying was and if they could identify it. Jason and Sally explained their accurate understanding to recognize bullying when they saw it. Jason stated, "When you do it repeatedly every time," to show that the bullying actions students take towards each other repeat over a period of time. Sally expanded the concept of bullying from

repeated actions to address the aggressiveness seen in bullying in their school. Sally stated that:

> Bullying is like fighting. They start pushing each other and fighting where bullying is like with a random person…like one is intentionally making the other one feel hurt and the other is intentionally to make them, like happy or something.

While most of the students in the class responded to defining bullying as Jason did, the deeper response from Sally emphasized the students' attempts at trying to determine the difference between what is bullying and what is fighting between students due to a conflict. Reece determined that bullying has negative impacts and stated that "It kills their confidence." Recognizing that bullying destroys confidence in a student that is bullied exhibited their ability to recognize what bullying does to a person. Through the discussions on bullying happening repeatedly and over time showed that the students gained knowledge on what bullying is.

Beliefs about bullying. Students showed a concern for following the school rules and the bully prevention strategies, since they felt like it left them open to violence from those who bully. They asked questions about what to do to defend themselves when they are attacked. The school has a zero-tolerance policy that sends both the bully and bullied home if their interaction results in violence and the students that are bullied defends themselves. Everett asked, "But what if they start it? You can't avoid it if they are going after you," suggesting the lack of control that students have on their peers' actions towards them. Like Everett, Sally showed concern about defending herself when she stated, "Or it's self-defense, if they punch you." Kevin explained the situation of self-defense that addressed the students defending their pride, stating, "If they are going to hit

you, you're not going to sit down and let them punch you in the face. We can't – we don't just let them hit us." His defensive attitude showed the issues that students struggled with between adhering to the school rules and not appearing weak to their peers. Based on researcher observations, the student expressed that if they did not defend themselves physically, then the bullying situation would get worse as well as appearing to be weak.

Jeremy discussed the fear he felt about the aggressive attitudes of others in bullying situations. He asked, "What if they hit you and you try to run away, but they keep hitting you in your back and you can't get up?" His question highlighted incidents where a student was unable to defend themselves and was unable to physically get to a safe location in the school.

The students want to adhere to the school rules, but also the fear of attack if they did not defend themselves. His response showed that the students are trying to go through the procedures at school to stop bullying. The school's policy states they must tell an adult, who should then report it to the administration. For example, Reece stated, "First you got to tell a teacher." Yet, they believe in defending themselves, since they have gone to school in an environment that did not enforce anti-bullying strategies consistently. While the school policies are zero-tolerance, the students' parents are advising their students to resort to violence to solve a problem with bullying. Roger stated, "My mom said if I'm getting bullied and I tell her and they tell a teacher and the teacher don't know or don't do anything about it, I can fight them." The students have been taught by their families that they need to defend themselves with physical aggression. They do not allow other people to attack them without reacting to the incident. This illustrated how students

126

in WRMS function from a position of defense, no matter if the school rules state the opposite.

These responses suggest that he students do not trust the adults in the school and that there is a conflict between school expectations and parental guidance on how to handle bullying incidents. The students' responses also suggested that they believe the teachers and principals do not handle the bullying situation, since the incidents may continue after the bully has been addressed.

Not only do students believe they need to defend themselves, they also believe they should not get involved to protect their peers in bullying situations. The students think that if they step in when they see bullying that they will be implicated in the bullying by teachers and administrators. Additionally, they believe that it could result in becoming the target of bullying. Jason stated, "You have the perception that it's not [your] problem, so you shouldn't get involved." Students believe that they should not involve themselves in the bullying they see around them in school, for fear that they will become involved in the bullying. John expressed the difficulty of defending a peer who is being bullied. He stated:

> Okay so, they start going after the person that didn't join in [on the bullying] sometimes. When you're trying to stop the bullying for this other kid, some people join in, and then somebody goes after [the person who tried to stop the bullying].

Kevin further mirrored this concern when he stated, "[You say] like stop, and then they keep going. Yeah, they know you don't like it so they have something on you.

These students expressed the difficulty they have with stepping in and trying to stop bullying. They explained their perceptions that when they try to help, the bully turns on them and begins to target them for bullying. The students showed difficulty in believing that they would be supported in trying to stop bullying in school. Instead they demonstrated that they function from a place of a bystander to bullying since they recognize bullying but will not get involved.

Reporting bullying. Many of the students stated that they tell their parents or siblings when they experience bullying. They also believed that many students who are bullied do not tell anyone about it. Additionally, the students stated that they believed that telling teachers at school could help, if the teacher then reports the incident or helps the student who is bullied. Sally, stated:

> If they're bullying you, the teachers can help prevent that by not letting you be around that person or keeping you away. And so, same as with your parents, they can stop you from going into social stuff 'cause they might be there.

Everett discussed the importance of telling teachers as well as parents since teachers see what is happening in the school. He stated: '

> Cause teachers at school, they can see what they're doing. Become more…If they're on the same team or at school as you, they can see if they're bullying or not; and at home it's different, 'cause they may not be around you, or your house, or your parents where they can see it.

Kevin supported the idea that teachers could see bullying incidents at school and discussed the importance for parents and teachers to communicate their concerns about bullying. He determined that:

They can talk to the teacher about what's going on. Because at school they can

see what is happening, but at home they can't.

Students expressed that teachers have a view that can determine if an incident is bullying, and while parents are supportive, they are not able to see how students interact with each other. These students were convinced that telling a teacher about bullying incidents would be helpful with being taken out of a situation and protected from a bully. Yet, there were other students who maintained their distrust of telling teachers and believed that nothing would result from reporting bullying incidents. Jason believed that teachers attempt to stop the bullying, but in the end do not take the bullying situation further than telling students to stop their actions. He stated:

Let's say I tell the truth, they do nothing about it. Teachers say stop, but they [the

bully] keep doing it like a week later. They stop for a week and they get back

started again and they tell the teacher again, and it don't stop. That's why there's

fights.

Billy also discussed how he felt teachers were saying they would help, but in the end did not help the students who were being bullied. He stated:

The teachers say it will help, but it doesn't. So, you just sit there and you can't do

anything because they said they would help, but they won't. So, they won't tell

anybody like another adult.

Students expressed their frustration with reporting bullying incidents and having their environment fail to change. The students who trust in reporting bullying and those who do not still illustrate that they know who to tell and when to report bullying incidents.

Their responses supported that they understand what bullying is and can recognize it in their environment.

Students are also experiencing situations where their friends told them about bullying but asked them to keep it a secret. Students were torn between being loyal to their friend and reporting the bullying so they could help. They believed that if they told and broke trust with their friend, that peer could stop telling anyone in the times they most needed help. Everett, who revealed that he lost his friend to suicide in sixth grade discussed the struggle with remaining loyal to a friend but trying to also help them. He stated:

> What if the person getting bullied doesn't want you to tell anybody else? What if they just want you to know, but not anybody else?

Sally discussed moments where her friends were threatened if they told they were being bullied. She stated, "They're scared because when they get bullied, they probably get threatened not to tell anyone. So, they're more scared."

Both students expressed situations where students avoid telling that they are being bullied. This is important since the students realized that the bullying should be reported but that the balance of power is not equal. They also recognized that there are emotions involved in the bullying situations. The students' responses suggested that they have an accurate understanding of what bullying is, how to identify it, and what they should do about it. Yet, their emotions of loyalty, fear, and mistrust impeded their success in moving from the position of bystander to a position of supporting the person who is being bullied.

Interplay of friendships and bullying. The theme addressed issues in navigating friendships that contributed to bullying in the school environment. The patterns that the students revealed dealt with their perceptions on the quality of friendships plus, inclusion and the impact of being different.

Quality of friendships. The students revealed that they believed their friends should support them if they are standing up to a bully. While one student feared the loss of friends by acting against bullying, other students stated that friends that turn against you are not actually your friends. Roger explained, "Quantity of friends, not quality of friends," when he determined that students should not focus on maintaining friends that will not support them when they are being bullied. Jason responded to becoming a bullying target by friends when he stated, "They ain't your friends if they bully you." Like Roger, Jason understood that friends that were reliable were those who stood beside them and helped them through bullying situations.

Yet, the students still expressed concern over the loss of friends, since they would know a person's weaknesses. They discussed situations where if they reached out to a friend who was bullied, they would themselves be targeted. Everett explained, "But your friend don't make fun of them, but make fun of you and the other person." He believed that his friends would target him if he stood up to their bullying actions towards a fellow peer. This belief led hit to thinking he would lose friends if he stood up to bullying behavior. John expressed the difficulty with standing up to bullying, also. He stated, "There's only at least two or three people standing up for you and the rest are trying to help out the bully." He believed that most of his friends would participate in the bullying he witnessed in school, which showed that he thought his friends perpetrated the

131

continuance of bullying in the school. The discussion revealed that the students recognized when a person was being bullied and the appropriate time to stand up to the bullying. However, they relied on self-preservation and habitually made choices to be bullying bystanders.

Inclusion and the impact of being different. The students discussed how the differences between students lead to creating an environment that excludes students who do not fit within peer groups. They believed that these differences lead to bullying in the school. Kevin and Sally suggested that outward appearances play an important role in middle school students excluding their peers. Kevin stated, "How much money they got" separated students by their differences in social class. Sally emphasized these differences I her statement that it is "Say their style of stuff, like what they wear and stuff" that marked their differences. These physical differences between peer groups makes it difficult for students to reach out to someone who is different from them, since they are afraid of being targeted by their friends.

Yet, the students devised a solution to invite a peer that was excluded to join their group. Kevin suggested, "Invite them to sit with you and your friends," and Everett added to his idea, stating, "Sit beside them and talk to them." Everett decided to take the challenge to try the suggestions they created. The next day he came in and talked about his experience with including someone new. He stated, "It felt weird. They had a smile on their face when I did it. I felt happy doing that. I also felt vulnerable. I had to look back at my friends. I had mixed emotions." His experience emphasized the dilemma that middle school students face when they attempt to try to include peers that are not a part of their friend groups. He felt unsure of himself and how his friends would react to him.

In his experience he related that his friends were still positive with him and did not target him or make fun of him. This experience suggested that the fear students have about reaching out to those who are excluded may be centered on their own insecurities about becoming vulnerable, instead of on their friends' reactions to them.

Identifying the positive relationships with friends and including others when they were left out indicated that the students' perceptions may have been based on a fear of what their peers thought of them. Their discussion revealed their fears of becoming targeted for bullying, due to their own insecurities. Yet, when Everett attempted to include others he discovered that his friends were less judgmental and did not target him. His perspective changed positively through interacting with others, discovering that they were happy, and he overcame the perception that he would be made fun of.

Everett inspired the intervention group to begin to work with the peers in the classroom that students felt uncomfortable with. Jason stated that when they worked in a cooperative activity they needed to "trust the other people to do it right." Gary stated, "We got to know each other," which demonstrated that the students attempted to learn about each other and worked together. Jimmy described their activity that his group created that required the students to work together. He stated:

> Well, we came up with [an idea where] we took away like hearing. And one
>
> person they'd build a statue and it's kinda like Jenga, but you can't hear it and
>
> they can't point at it. But they have to guide you.

Their classroom environment transformed from a community of differences to one that gave the students a chance to understand each other. Due to this, the environment

changed in the intervention group towards a positive perspective on preventing bullying and improving their classroom environment.

Developing empathy. The theme addressed the perceptions students develop towards others that prevent them from gaining an understanding of their peers. They discussed empathy and how they navigated their own perspectives as well as determining how others felt and reacted to students standing up to bullying. The students addressed elements in empathy that dealt with getting along, understanding each other, and recognizing empathy in their own actions. They discussed the difficulties with being able to show empathy to a person who had bullied them. John said, "It's just hard to show empathy to people we don't like, because they might be really aggravating, and you don't like them, so really don't care what happens." Billy expressed his perspective of seeking revenge when he stated, "Well, you might not have a choice. If you don't like them, you would want something to happen to them. If they were mean to you, it's kind of a revenge thing, you wouldn't really care." Jeremy discussed his difficulties with communicating with a person that had bullied him. He stated, "I think if you don't like them, or you don't wanna tell them that you don't like them…so they bully you for a long time. And then you can't go to them anymore and you have to tell them."

These students' perspectives depicted the difficulties that victims have in being able to communicate with peers who have hurt them in the past. They operate from a perspective of distrust, which prevents them from being able to show empathy when the person who bullied them in the past needs someone to stand up for them. This perspective causes the continued cycle of bullying in the environment.

Though these students found it hard to be empathetic to those who had hurt them in the past, a few students attempted to find reasons to understand the people who had been hurtful. They discussed issues of not knowing what their lives outside of school is like and attempting to get to know them. Betsy and Sally expressed reasons to try to understand those who have hurt them. Betsy stated, "Because the people we don't get along with, you don't know what's happened in their life, and you don't know what's going on. And the circle of friends we do like, we always know what's going on with them." Sally interpreted her reasons as reaching out and helping peers that you already knew. She stated, "I think it's easy because, if you knew them, you would know stuff about them, and what would happen, and how stuff happened in their life…you would help them." These students discussed how it was easier to support the people they knew and were friends with over the people they did not get along with. This finding suggested that students are more likely to report a bullying incident as a bystander if they had positive feelings about that person and were less likely to report incidents of bullying for the people they do not like. Therefore, they are less likely to show empathy for a person whom has hurt them or bullied them in the past.

Yet, these students also expressed their ability to show empathy when they reflected on experiences in their lives. Sally and John shared experiences where they both failed to show empathy. Sally stated, "When my grandfather passed away, I didn't show empathy towards my mom." John said, "I didn't show sympathy when my cousin broke his arm." These students showed remorse as they reflected on their behavior and not showing empathy. This suggested that they were attempting to show empathy towards others since they realized they hurt their family members. In contrast, Kevin expressed

135

showing empathy to a peer when they needed a friend. He stated, "I showed empathy when someone was crying. I told them they're gonna be okay." Additionally, Sally was able to recognize when a friend showed her empathy, stating, "One of my best friends showed empathy towards me when my dad passed away." Their experiences suggested that they had the ability to recognize empathy. Additionally, their remorse for not showing empathy towards others suggested that the students would attempt to show empathy towards their family members and peers in the future. Their focus on family members illustrated how it was easier for them to show empathy to people who are close to them, and that showing empathy towards peers is more difficult.

Showing courage. The next theme navigated through defining courage and how they experience it in their own lives. The students discussed the difficulty with being courageous in social situations, when their principles are being put into question, and the times when they needed the most courage. They determined that the social situations require courage and that they tend to avoid displaying courage for fear of embarrassment. Reece, Betsy, and Bianca discussed moments of courage and why they could or could not be courageous. Reece stated:

> As long as I don't know the people there and that I won't see them ever again. But if I knew them, it's real different. I go to school with them four more years. They're going to know that I did that. If you get into an argument, they can bring that up.

Betsy agreed with Reece, saying, "That the other person will embarrass them because they make fun of you." Bianca continued the discussion, stating, "You are all friends so it's hard, because if you are siding with one person then the rest of the group is going to

not like you." These students discussed the difficulties with the people whom they considered to be friends turning into the people who bully them. They felt that they needed to hide their abilities and refrain from disagreeing with the group to prevent their friends from using personal information as weapons to hurt them. These students displayed behavior in their responses that suggested they were always defending their image and how they are perceived by others.

The students also discussed the issue of going against their principles to maintain their position in their friend groups. John, Chris, Kevin, and Everett addressed moments where they went against their principles. John expressed, "How do I explain this? So, to stand up for somebody else when you used to be a bully." The researcher observed John's difficulty with explaining his position, since he was trying to grasp the idea that he had at one time been a bully to others. Chris discussed the issue of self-confidence when he goes against his principles, stating, "Thinking that your opinion doesn't matter." This showed that Chris believes that his opinion may not be valued by his peers, which causes him to go against his principles. Like Chris, Kevin also second-guessed his actions "when you think you are doing something wrong." While he may have known what to do, the influence from his peers caused him to question whether his actions were correct. Finally, Everett stated that the desire to be liked by peers may cause a student to go against what they know is right.

These students revealed the lack of self-confidence that they have in being able to stand up for their peers. They perceive that they will get in trouble, as stated earlier in incidents where students did receive disciplinary action after reporting bullying incidents.

They are concerned with their self-image and how their peers view them, which contradicts the actions that are needed to work towards preventing bullying in the school.

Though they avoid stepping up, the students can recognize when and why they need to show courage and speak out. John, Billy, Reece, and Everett expressed the moments they needed to show courage. John stated that the moment he needed courage was when he "admit[ed] that [he] was a bully." Billy said a person needed to have courage "if [a peer was] being bullied but they used to be one of your bullies." Reece believed that it was courageous "when they're alone," which meant that person was the only one standing up to the bullying incident. Everett determined that the peers "getting bullied or picked on" are showing courage for persevering through the bullying.Their suggestions revealed that although they recognize when to be courageous, they refrain from acting on preventing bullying. They hesitate to be courageous and take a stand in their environment. Due to this, the students exist in their environment as passive bystanders who recognize bullying incidents but refuse to help stop bullying.

Presenting one's image to peers. The final theme addressed how students hide their true feelings to prevent from becoming targets of bullying, as well as their ability to identify emotions accurately. The students suggested that they fail to show their true feelings and image to their peers, therefore hide behind a mask and present themselves differently to their peers. The students used the symbolic image of a Halloween mask as the way they prevented their peers from knowing their identities. Sally said that wearing a mask provided protection, where "they don't see you, they see your mask, not the inside. They see how you talk and your emotions and what you are saying." Bianca stated, "Like no one can make fun of you, 'cause they don't know who you are," which

added to the idea that a mask provides the user with protection. Jimmy added the analogy that "if you are Darth Vader, you're gonna talk like, all deep, like the voice," therefore wearing a mask gives the person the chance to hide their identity and present themselves the way they want others to see them. These students described how when a person wears a mask, others cannot see who they truly are, they cannot make fun of them, and they can present themselves as an image they are not. The emotional masks that students wear serve as a form of protection that shields them from getting hurt, but also shields them from their peers getting to know who they are.

The students suggested that there may be reasons for a peer not wanting to reveal their selves and become vulnerable. Sally suggested that bullying leads a student to hide their feelings from others. She stated:

> When someone's getting bullied, they don't want to show their expressions because they want people to think that they're okay, and they're just fine. So, they just hide their emotions. They could feel angry, any type of emotion, but they just want to hide it, no matter what type of emotion it is.

Betsy said, "When [students] are depressed because [they] don't want [their peers] to know [they] are upset." The students determined that hiding feelings were important factors for maintaining safety in the school. Becoming emotionally vulnerable was perceived as the least desirable action for students to take. Yet, the students can recognize that they wear emotional masks and hide how they feel from each other. These findings indicated that students were not willing to show vulnerability, though it was an act of courage. They were fearful of how their peers would view them and concerned that it would lead them to becoming targets of bullying.

Concluding ideas. The themes that emerged in the class lessons were conceptualizing bullying, beliefs about bullying, reporting bullying, the interplay of friendships and bullying, developing empathy, showing courage, and presenting one's image to peers. In each of these themes, the students were able to recognize when they should act to prevent bullying incidents. They were able to identify the moments they should show empathy towards their peers but refrained from practicing empathy. They could state when they should be courageous and why they hid behind emotional masks but were unable to provide examples where they revealed their emotions to their peers.

In one-on-one conversations with the researcher, they were able to show emotional vulnerability. The students' use of terms like "making fun" for moments when they were bullied showed that society has de-emphasized the impact that bullying has on youth. The students demonstrated their vulnerability in the discussions and built relationships with each other and the teacher, which resulted in developing trust in their peers. Additionally, they were able to take small challenges to try to make a change in their environment. Their behavior in the intervention classroom seemed to become politer with each other, if the researcher provided continued support to help the students apply their knowledge. The change in behavior for the students illustrated the developing relationships between the students and the teacher researcher, which was a necessary factor in creating a safe environment for implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© effectively. Due to their hesitancy to act against bullying beyond the intervention classroom but understanding when they needed to act, the students showed a gain in knowledge while their pre-existing perceptions remained the same.

Data Triangulation

The quantitative and qualitative data for the study created an illustration of the difficulties with bullying prevention education in White Rose Middle School for students who have been identified as "learning disabled." Students entered into the school having previously been taught to use aggression to defend themselves in bullying situations. Additionally, they have learned to not get involved and function from a position of fear to prevent from being identified as weak.

The quantitative data suggested that the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)*©, studied over a period of 10 weeks, does not have an immediate impact on students' perspectives and understanding of bullying and how to make changes in the school climate. The qualitative data, which consisted of the students' responses and discussions during the lesson, also resulted in their struggle with identifying bullying situations and incorporating the appropriate strategies to make positive changes. Many of the same issues of frustration and trust reemerged in later lessons as the students began processing what they learned in previous lessons. Due to these data points not showing a significant change in student perceptions towards bullying for the intervention group, the shorter application of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* proves insignificant as a method specifically for middle-level students identified as "Learning Disabled."

Hong (2009) found that the *OBPP*© was originally implemented in upper/middle class schools but not tested for its effectiveness in schools with higher cultural diversity and low socioeconomic status. WRMS has a 74% rate of students who are categorized as having a low socioeconomic status. Hong (2009) stated, "that among preschool children, the prevalence of behavioral problems is estimated to be between 3% and 6% in the

general population, whereas it is 30% among low-income areas" (p. 85). By the time these students are in middle school, the behavioral problems are compounded with the impact of hormones in puberty. In the inclusion classroom, these students have the added impact of 45-55% of the class population identified as having a "learning disability." The intervention group consisted of 31% of the students identified as having a learning disability. The English Language Learners represents 25% of the class with half of those students also identified as learning disabled. The demographics of race for the intervention group was 19% African American, 25% Hispanic, and 63% Caucasian. Out of the intervention group, 69% of those students do not meet grade level reading criteria and benefit from being assigned to an inclusion class that could provide them with assistance. Schools with higher behavioral and bullying problems found that here were higher levels of disrespect and disobedience, which resulted in these students having significant deficits in their leaning and social skills (Hong, 2009). The inclusion classrooms at WRMS historically are populated with students that have higher deficits in learning, typically also having lower abilities in social skills that contribute to behavioral issues in the classroom. After 10 weeks of this study, the results from the intervention group showed that their ability to understand bullying and their reactions to the *OBPP©* closely align with the difficulties found in applying the program to a low-income school. Hong (2009) suggested that the *OBPP©* needs to be reevaluated for use in low-income schools. Not only should the program be reevaluated for use in low-income schools, it also needs to be reevaluated and revamped for use in classrooms that serve students with learning disabilities.

Lee and Cornell (2010) also determined that the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire may not prove to be a reliable questionnaire for students with higher discipline infractions. They determined that bullies had higher rates of discipline infractions. The intervention group at WRMS consisted of six students who received discipline infractions. These five students consisted of two Caucasian males, one Caucasian female, one Hispanic male, and one African American male. Their discipline infractions over the 10-week intervention consisted of a total of seven days of out-of-school suspension (OSS) and one and a half days of in-school suspension (ISS). They were reported as being defiant, disrespectful, participating in "horseplay," which is a term used by the school for aggressive behavior that is not fighting. Three out of these five students are categorized as learning disabled. All but one of these students have deficits in learning based on their reading scores. Lee and Cornell (2010) stated, "Poor academic performance is also associated with bullying" and suggested that these students were less likely to apply themselves in the classroom (p. 60). At WRMS, the students in the intervention historically had lower academic achievement scores on standardized tests since third grade. Additionally, these students also are not performing as well as they are capable and fail to turn in assignments and apply themselves to the class work on a daily basis. Lee and Cornell (2010) questioned the use of a self-reporting measurement in the *OBPP©,* since they found that victims tended to receive a higher rate of disciplinary infractions and victims may be able to better recognize when they are being bullied, but bullies were less likely to be able to recognize when they are bullies. Bauer et al. (2007) also found that the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire for student reporting proved insignificant. The reaction of the intervention group to the *OBPP©* classroom lessons

illustrated the difficulty they had in determining what constituted bullying. Lee and Cornell (2010) suggested using a larger sample to determine the effectiveness of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire. Bauer et al. (2007) advised that schools need to closely monitor the outcomes of a large-scale bullying prevention program and its impact on race and culture. Similarly, the impact of the *OBPP©* needs to be expanded into other inclusion classrooms and the rest of the WRMS to determine if the findings over the course of 10 weeks was specific to the intervention group in this study.

Black and Jackson (2007) investigated the impact of the *OBPP©* on schools that served elementary to eighth grade. Their findings suggested that after the program was implemented in six schools across four years, the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire that measures student perceptions showed no differences from their baseline year to the fourth year (Black & Jackson, 2007). What the findings did show was that the implementation procedures of the school staff in the schools did change with directly impacted the rates of observed bullying after four years. Black et al. (2010) also discussed the empowerment of schools and communities working together on a bullying prevention program, where they determined the policies of the schools changed to improve the environment. Their study suggests that the pre- and post-questionnaire on student perceptions may not change after implementing the *OBPP©* in the school. While the questionnaire proved effective in the original study in Norway, schools in the United States are questioning whether it is an appropriate implementation for bullying prevention. The intervention group results at WRMS also revealed that there were no significant changes in the pre- and post-questionnaire, which was specifically used to maintain the procedures and testing the *OBPP©* required to determine if there was a significant impact. Black and

144

Jackson (2010) suggested that a better criterion for determining if bullying decreased in school was to develop a separate measurement that involved observing the behavior of students over a time. While a pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior was conducted in the intervention classroom, a reformulated observation of bullying behavior based on discipline infractions should be created and implemented through the school year to determine if there are changes in bullying behavior at WRMS. It would also benefit WRMS to conduct a study to determine if its policies and procedures are contributing to the environment to ensure that the adults in the building are modeling behavior expected of the students.

Link to Research Question

The Present Action Research study focuses on the issues surrounding the implementation the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© on middle-level students in an inclusion classroom. These students are often from a low socioeconomic background who have been identified by the school district as "learning disabled," who are documented in the school as having behavior problems in the traditional classroom structure and include the population of ELL and general education students. The research question is as follows: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (*OBPP*)© on middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled? Based on the findings, the short-term impact of the *OBPP*© did not show an overall significance on the middle-level students identified as "learning disabled." Their knowledge, classroom behaviors, and perceptions remained the same despite the intervention lessons focusing on bullying prevention to improve the classroom environment.

The secondary research questions addressed the impacts of the quantitative instruments and the qualitative instruments. The quantitative instruments included the bullying knowledge pre- and posttest, the pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior, and the pre- and post-questionnaire on student perceptions of bullying entitled the "Olweus Bullying Questionnaire." The research question for the pre- and posttest is as follows: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on the knowledge about bullying of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"? Student knowledge did not show a significant change after the intervention. This suggested the short-term intervention of the *OBPP©* was not effective.

The research question for the pre- and post-observation is as follows: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on the bullying behavior of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"? Observed bullying behavior did not change after the students received the intervention. The lack of significant change suggested the short-term intervention had no effect on the bullying behaviors of students identified with learning disabilities.

The research question for the pre- and post-questionnaire is as follows: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on the perception of school bullying of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"? Student perceptions of bullying in their school did not show a significant change after receiving the intervention. This suggested that the program does not prove effective when used as a short-term intervention since student perceptions had no change.

The qualitative instrument was the intervention that resulted in transcripts of student responses from the classroom lessons to what they understood and believed about bullying, how they developed empathy and relationships with their peers, and their responses to bullying in their environment. The research question for the classroom lessons is as follows: How do middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled" react to the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©*? The reactions of the students to the program was difficult at first, since they showed difficulties in developing understandings of bullying beyond physical aggression, identifying bullying incidents that were subtle, developing empathy towards peers consistently, and understanding the process of reporting bullying. Due to these struggles, the students need a longer period of time to develop their understandings through continued class lessons and reinforcement. Therefore, the short-term intervention was not effective in changing students' behaviors in the inclusion classroom.

Conclusion

The process of conducting the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* intervention included conducting the curriculum from the program in an inclusion classroom with students documented as having learning disabilities. While the curriculum did not occur over the whole school year and throughout the whole school, as suggested by the *OBPP©,* it was implemented over the course of 10 weeks. During these 10 weeks, the process included gathering various types of quantitative data, qualitative data from the students' responses to the lessons, and discipline data from the school. The quantitative data included the bullying knowledge pre- and posttest, the pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior, and the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire. The

147

knowledge pre- and posttest indicated the students gained a basic understanding of bullying, but overall did not show a significant increase in their knowledge. The pre- and post-observation on bullying behavior showed that the students' behaviors did not change significantly after the intervention. The pre- and post-questionnaire resulted in student perspectives remaining the same after the intervention. The qualitative data included student responses collected during the intervention lessons. Their responses indicated they were able to recognize bullying and when they should act to prevent bullying, but that they refrained from acting to prevent bullying in their school.

The impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* on the participants indicated that the short-term intervention did not have an impact. White Rose Middle School has had difficulty in conducting the *OBPP©* to fit within their weekly schedule. The homeroom period fails to give enough time for conducting the program each week, causing the classroom lessons to carry over into instructional time. To conduct the *OBPP©* with fidelity, the teachers, administrators, and students need to be committed to applying the program consistently over the course of two to four years, as seen in other implementations. Therefore, a short-term intervention will show minimal results in a middle school, though WRMS continues to attempt short-term implementations of the *OBPP©* to reduce bullying in the school.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At White Rose Middle School(WRMS) (pseudonym) in the lower Piedmont region of South Carolina, students with individualized education plans (IEPs), behavioral intervention plans (BIPs), and 504 Plans frequently draw the gaze of their fellow students in the inclusion classroom when they fail to attend to their work, negatively behave in the class, and need special assistance from one of the two co-teachers in the inclusion classroom (IC). According to The State of South Carolina Department of Education (SSCDE) (2004), the purpose of educating students with disabilities is, "to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living" (p. 2). The term "learning disability" is often used in the United States to identify students who have an official diagnosis by a medical doctor or certified psychologist in the school system with an IEP, BiP, and/or 504 Plan. These students are legally required to receive special services in the U.S. public school system through specifically designed resource classes and inclusion classes. The participant researcher of the present action research study was involved with special services at WRMS as a core English teacher with an inclusion classroom.

Problem Statement

In White Rose Middle School, student behavior results in altercations, rumors, and teasing students at a disadvantage. These student interactions lead to conflicts that they have not previously been taught how to navigate to resolve. The conflicts frequently lead to physical aggression, a lack of empathy, and verbal abuse. The behaviors between students were brought into the classroom, which negatively impacted the learning environment. In the inclusion classroom, these behaviors and peer interactions are compounded by the population of students identified as having a "learning disability." These students have difficulties with self-regulation, which results in them being impulsive in the classroom with both the lesson and their peers. they have difficulty in understanding empathy, so tend to not show empathy to their classmates. They communicate with each other as if they were on social media, which impacts their ability to understand that their harsh reactions to each other could result in peers perceiving that they are not accepted or liked by the classroom community. The researcher identified these behaviors and reactions as disruptions that lead to further conflict and future bullying behaviors.

Students in the inclusion classroom at White Rose Middle School disrupt the learning environment due to the disproportionate assignment of identified special education students and English Language Learners representing 45-50 percent of the classroom population. Previous implementations of behavioral interventions prove ineffective, resulting in a continued reactionary approach to disruptive behavior in the classroom. The identified Problem of Practice (PoP) for the present Action Research study has the general education teacher implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention*

Plan© to attempt to decrease the incidences of negative behaviors within the inclusion classroom. The action researcher will apply the method of a pre- and post-test, pre-and post-observations, and the implementation of the *OBPP©* intervention to show the program's impact on behavior in the inclusion classroom.

Purpose Statement

To address the differences of students with "learning disabilities" and help their peers understand them better, the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©*, funded by the school district, was incorporated in classroom instruction. The goal of the action research was to help all students in the inclusion classroom to better understand each other's differences, resulting in a healthy classroom environment. According to The State of South Carolina Department of Education (SSCDE) (2004), the purpose of educating students with disabilities is "To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living" (p. 2). The participant researcher incorporated the *OBPP©* to determine if she could decrease the incidents of negative behavior in the inclusion classroom through bullying prevention education from both the students with "learning disabilities" and the students without "learning disabilities."

Research Questions

The present action research study focused on the issues surrounding the implementation of a behavior-modification model called the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on middle-level students in an inclusion classroom. Therefore, the main research question is as follows:

151

RQ1:   What is the impact of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Plan (OBPP) on middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled?"

The secondary research questions are as follows:

SRQ1: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on the knowledge about bullying of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"?

SRQ2: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on the bullying behavior of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"?

SRQ3: What is the short-term impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©* on the perception of the school bullying of middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled"?

SRQ4: How do middle-level students who have been identified as "learning disabled" react to the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)©*?

Methodology

The action research methodology examined the researcher's role in the study, the site and participants the study took place, and the data collection procedures. The researcher served as a participant in the concurrent mixed methods design (Coe et al., 2017). The study took place in an inclusion classroom that consisted of students with learning disabilities, English as a Second Language students, and students with no accommodations. The data collection consisted of both quantitative and qualitative instruments to determine the impact on the intervention on the middle-level students with learning disabilities.

Researcher role. The researcher's role in the action research study was as the inclusion classroom teacher for eighth grade English Language Arts. In the role of teacher and researcher, she served as an active participant in the concurrent mixed methods design (Coe et al., 2017). The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© lessons were taught by the researcher as an active participant guiding her students through discussions on bullying prevention. The role of participant provided the researcher with a full knowledge of the needs of her students and what they directly experienced in the school and the classroom. The students were measured through a one-group pretest-posttest design. For this collection of data, the researcher collected quantitative data through a bullying knowledge pre- and posttest, a pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior, and the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire as a pre- and post-questionnaire on perceptions of bullying. The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© classroom lessons served as the intervention, in which the researcher created transcripts from the audio-recorded student responses. The researcher also kept an audit trail of her observations from the classroom lessons, which placed her in the position of being both an insider as she participated and an outsider as she reflected on her interactions with the students. In the data collection role, the researcher was able to analyze the data outside of the classroom to reflect on her findings.

Site and participants. The research was conducted in an eighth grade English Language Arts inclusion classroom at White Rose Middle School. Historically, inclusion classrooms in both English Language Arts have been populated by 48%-52% special education students. Due to this high population of special education students, difficulties with behavior exhibited incidents of bullying between the students were observed at a

153

higher rate than the eighth-grade English Language Arts classes without special education students. The special education students' learning disabilities were documented through individualized education plans (IEP), behavioral intervention plans (BIP), and 504 Plans. In addition to this population, the inclusion classroom was also populated with English language learners (ELL) that may also have an IEP or BIP. Frequently, students with IEPs who have emotional disturbance (ED) or receive frequent disciplinary actions will also have a BIP attached to their IEP. Historically, the demographics of the inclusion classroom at WRMS is between 19-22 students with the following identifying factors: 12-13 males at 59%-63%, 7-9 females at 37%-41%, 14-16 Caucasian students at 63%-84%, 2-4 African American students at 11%-18%, 1-4 Hispanic/ELL students at 5%-18%, and 8-9 students classified with IEP/BIP/504 Plan at 36%-47%. WRMS also classifies 74% of its student population to receive free and reduced lunch, which places the students in a school with high poverty rates.

Data collection procedures. The action research study incorporated a concurrent mixed methods design. Quantitative data was collected through a one-group pretest-posttest design. The bullying knowledge pretest and posttest was an assessment to determine student understanding of bullying before and after the treatment. The researcher conducted a pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior to determine changes in student behavior and peer interaction. A pre- and post-questionnaire on perceptions of bullying was given before and after the intervention of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* lessons to determine students' perceptions of the rates and types of bullying they are experiencing The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©*

154

classroom lessons were the treatment. Qualitative data was collected through lessons audio recorded that were later transcribed for analysis.

Results

The process of conducting the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© intervention included conducting the curriculum from the program in an inclusion classroom with students documented as having learning disabilities. The researcher triangulated the quantitative and qualitative data to emphasize the difficulties in bullying prevention education in the inclusion classroom at White Rose Middle School.

Quantitative Data. The quantitative data suggested the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© did not have an immediate impact on the perceptions and understandings of bullying of middle-level students identified as "learning disabled." The bullying knowledge pre- and posttest indicated the students had an overall decrease in knowledge after the intervention. The results of questions based on accurately defining bullying showed an increase in knowledge, while the ability to identify indirect forms of bullying revealed a decrease in their knowledge. The decreases on the pretest to posttest suggested the students were more likely to believe inaccurate claims about bullying. The dependent samples t-test results indicated that the intervention had no impact on the students' knowledge of bullying from the pretest to posttest and that the students did not understand the definition of bullying after 10 weeks of the intervention.

The pre- and post-observation measured bullying behavior of students in the intervention. The results showed that their behavior in disrupting the classroom environment increased. Their increase in negative behaviors suggested that the students were more likely to disrupt the classroom environment. The results also indicated a

decrease in positive behaviors. This suggested that the decrease resulted in students having less self-confidence to participate in the classroom environment. Another result showed a decrease in aggression, which suggested there were less physical interactions between students in the class environment. Less physical interactions indicated that the students were not hitting, poking, and interfering with each other's desks and materials in the classroom. The dependent samples t-test results indicated that there was no significant change in their behavior from the pre-observation to the post-observation, suggesting that the intervention had no impact on the students' behavior.

The pre- and post-questionnaire measured student perceptions of bullying within their school. The results determined that students perceive that they are reporting bullying, trying to stop bullying, and show empathy towards their peers. The results also showed that the students perceived that they are not participating in bullying as frequently, are decreasing bullying for others, and do not fear bullying as much. Yet, the results also indicated that the students perceive that they are experiencing bullying from their peers and that the bullying is lasting for longer durations of time. They also perceive that there is a decrease in communication with their parents and teachers and believe their teachers are doing less about bullying. The dependent samples t-test indicated that the results showed no significant differences from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire, suggesting that the intervention had no impact on students' perceptions but the observed changes towards increasing their knowledge about bullying and empathy toward their peers show a trend that is worth further investigation.

Qualitative Data. The qualitative data consisted of students' responses to the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*© lessons, shown through transcripts of audio-

recorded data collected during the intervention. The qualitative data suggested the students struggled with identifying bullying situations and applying the strategies taught during the intervention. The themes that emerged in the class lessons were conceptualizing bullying, beliefs about bullying, reporting bullying, the interplay of friendships and bullying, developing empathy, showing courage, and presenting one's image to peers. In each of these themes, the students were able to recognize when they should act to prevent bullying incidents. They were able to identify the moments they should show empathy towards their peers but refrained from practicing empathy. They stated when they should be courageous and why they hid behind emotional masks but were unable to provide examples where they revealed their emotions to their peers.

In one-on-one conversations with the researcher in the hallway between classes, they were able to show emotional vulnerability. There were moments when students requested to talk with the researcher about difficult issues they dealt with in school and at home, which were issues they felt uncomfortable speaking about in from of their peers. They were able to take small challenges to try to make a change in their environment. Their behavior in the intervention classroom seemed to become politer with each other, if the researcher provided continued support to help the students apply their knowledge. Due to their hesitancy to act against bullying beyond the intervention classroom but understanding when they needed to act, the students showed no gain in knowledge after receiving the intervention.

The researcher found that the students in the inclusion classroom cycled through issues of frustration and trust as a reaction to the intervention lessons, therefore their environment remained the same as before the 10-week intervention. Due to these data

157

points not showing a significant change in student knowledge of bullying, student behavior, and perceptions of bullying for the intervention group, the shorter application of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* proves insignificant as a method specifically for middle-level students identified as "learning disabled."

Curriculum Leader Role

The researcher served as a participant in the action research study in the inclusion classroom. She conducted the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* as an intervention for students in the eighth-grade English Language Arts inclusion classroom, which included students identified as having "learning disabilities." Brubaker (2004) stated, "Creative curriculum leaders who foster community recognize that moral and social responsibilities are deeply rooted in the concept of creative leadership. There is a sincere or authentic desire to make a difference in the lives of others" (p. 131). The *OBPP©* served as curriculum that helped students develop their moral character, showing that the researcher had the desire to improve the lives of her students. The researcher believed in having self-awareness in her interactions with her students. Goleman (2001) defined self-awareness as "having a deep understanding of one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and drives" (p. 8). In the inclusion classroom, the researcher needed to show patience and understanding to help the students develop their understanding of the *OBPP©* curriculum.

Leaders should also have organizational skills and the ability to work collaboratively on teams. Clear communication skills are needed for providing organizational planning and working in leadership teams. Gardner (2000) stated that leadership is "the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership

158

team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers" (p. 3). In the inclusion classroom, it is necessary to have clear strategies and directions for students for them to follow the expectation for lessons, so they have the ability to perform at their highest level. The researcher should communicate clearly with fellow teachers and share the ideas and strategies used in the inclusion classroom.

Collaboration on teams is crucial to creating effective lessons for inclusion classrooms. The researcher worked collaboratively with the bullying prevention coordinators of WRMS to address the way the rest of the school could begin implementing the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©*. Collaborating with school leadership eliminated the difficulties of overwhelming the individual teacher with planning to teach the *OBPP©* lessons that were disconnected from content curriculum. Through the collaboration, the researcher worked with the district bullying prevention coordinator to create a cohesive curriculum that aligned the Olweus lessons for instruction and alleviated the amount of work involved with creating lessons independently.

The desire to build a community of educators, being organized, and collaborating with faculty is fundamental to the curriculum leader's success in a school. The leader needs the support of the faculty and staff, therefore needs to acknowledge how they can help each other and value the skills everyone contributes to the development of the school. Through teaming, the leader positions herself as a valued member of the school leadership, which provides her with the chance to help her school excel in their goals together.

Implications for Further Research

The communities need to have programs to prevent violence and to promote understanding. Violence prevention programs in the community need to be evaluated to determine if they are working (Bauer et al., 2007). The small town that White Rose Middle School is in has a diverse community that is divided by social classes and race. The town has community gangs that recruit and initiate middle school students as members since they can only be prosecuted as minors. The town resources for youth is in the local YMCA and the Recreational Center for team sports. For students who are not interested in sports, local churches and youth groups are the only other resources. The community programs for violence prevention are the United Way to help with substance abuse in teens, Safe Passages South Carolina to help with domestic violence and sexual assault, and the Department of Social Services. These programs serve four school districts in the local area and are not specific to services only in the small town.

Collaborating with the community resources to help promote the *OBPP©* is suggested. Black et al. (2010) stated, "Collaborations provide a level of empowerment in the community that is often not seen in external or top-down approaches" (p. 739). WRMS enlists a local church to host Bible education and to provide students with support and mentoring that they may not receive beyond the school. The school also has an in-house psychologist from the local mental health facility to help provide students with support and counseling. Yet, the community connections the school maintains does not involve them with the bullying prevention efforts in the school. Research needs to be done to determine if the involvement in a community connection in the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* would have an impact on student behavior. Getting local law

160

enforcement officers and community leaders involved with the program implementation may result in a different impact to improve the school culture.

Continued research on the impact of bullying programs in low-income communities needs to continue. The stressful situations that occur in schools like WRMS need to be researched to determine if bullying prevention programs, like the *OBPP©*, are meeting the needs of their students (Hong, 2009). The levels of research should include the effectiveness of training that teachers receive to implement the program, the community environment and initial responses to the program, and the availability of community involvement in implementing the program. Most of the research on low-income schools has been conducted in urban communities instead of rural communities, like the one WRMS is in. Therefore, research to determine if the program is more successful in a rural community considered low-income could be useful for determining if small communities with limited resources could benefit from a bullying prevention program implemented in the schools. For future studies, the researcher suggests that each of the secondary research questions should be examined individually for at least a school year. This would provide data on specific student growth to determine if the findings of the results are due to the instrument or a specific learning deficit connected to the individual student.

Action Plan and Implications for Further Practice

The action plan suggests the ways for WRMS to determine the impact of the program school-wide and for the specific impact of the program on middle-level students identified as having a "learning disability." The future action plans addresses the changes in the research design for the inclusion classroom, the changes in the bullying knowledge

pretest-posttest for the school-wide implementation, changes in the pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior to address the discipline specific to the school, and developing a program that involved parents in the bullying prevention education. The implications for further practice discusses the implementation of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* in the middle school, the need to increase teacher participation in the program, a reevaluation of the *OBPP©* pre- and post-questionnaire on perceptions of bullying, and an application of an intensive approach in the inclusion classroom for students identified as having "learning disabilities."

The action research study attempted to determine the impact the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* had on middle-level students who have been identified and "learning disabled." Due to the complexity of the study, the researcher found preliminary findings on the overall impact of the *OBPP©*. The researcher conducted the study over the course of 10 weeks, which limited the time for the students to grasp the concepts of bullying prevention and to begin implementing them. Due to the 10-week implementation, the researcher conducted the four foundational lessons and chose 10 lessons out of the 36 lessons available from the supplementary text, *Classroom Meeting that Matter: Grades 6-8.* While the 10 lessons she chose addressed issues observed in the inclusion classroom setting, the full implementation of the program could provide better results. The researcher kept an audit trail of the interactions and student responses to document her initial impressions of the classroom lessons and how the students responded to them. The researcher intends on sharing all finding with her administrator, school bullying prevention coordinator, and district office to show the need for extending

162

the program for a longer study in the schools that includes the foundational lessons and the 36 lessons from *Classroom Meetings that Matter: Grades 6-8*.

Another study design that the researcher incorporated was measuring the students as a one-group pretest-posttest. The researcher gathered data for the intervention group and discovered that the students had behavioral differences that impacted the findings. The students in the inclusion classroom that were not identified with "learning disabilities" were observed by the researcher as being less disruptive in the classroom environment. Students identified with "learning disabilities" tended to be impulsive in answering questions, had difficulty in following classroom procedures, yelled out answers while another student had been called on to answer, and would overly focus on one idea in the lessons during the intervention. Due to the specific behavioral differences of students identified with "learning disabilities," the researcher would change future study designs to measure the changes in the specific students to a single-subject research design. This design would measure the changes of each student identified with a "learning disability" to get a clearer picture of the impact of the *OBPP©* on this population of students.

Additionally, the researcher plans on expanding the study as a school-wide program. Since the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* relies on the measurement of the student Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, she suggests that the school also measure the impact on the program through a redesigned bullying knowledge pretest-posttest to determine if the student population understands the bullying prevention concepts. The researcher realized that the vocabulary and language used in the knowledge pretest-posttest may have impacted student understanding. Therefore, the knowledge pretest-

posttest should be simplified to better test student understanding of bullying rather than student understanding of vocabulary.

Like the bullying knowledge pretest-posttest, the pre- and post-observations of bullying behavior will need revision for a school-wide initiative. The original instrument was designed for the inclusion classroom environment and the behaviors seen within that class. For the school-wide implementation, a behavioral characteristics chart should be created based on the discipline data the school would like to improve. It will need to be field tested in a pilot study to determine if it is a reliable measurement for the school. After determining the behavioral observation chart is reliable, the researcher with help from the administration, bullying coordinators, and guidance counselors could conduct the classroom observations that would measure student behavior prior to the *OBPP©* and after the program.

While the redesign of the instruments to continue implementing the program at the school is useful, parent involvement for students in the school needs to increase. One of the foundational parts of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* is getting the parents and community involved as participants in the program lessons. When students get their introduction to the *OBPP©* program at school, there needs to be a parent orientation to the program. The researcher will help develop a program for parents to attend that informs them and gives them strategies for dealing with bullying incidents. This would help the parents become a unified part of the program since the students are supposed to report bullying incidents they experience to an adult at school and an adult at home. Part of the parent orientation should provide a session where they can ask questions about who they report to and what they should expect. It would also give them

a chance to talk with the coordinators, administrators, and guidance counselors about their concerns about cyber bullying and what to watch for. The researcher would also gather community resources for the parents so they will know where to go if their child counseling or medical support during the school year.

The results of the study suggested that there are four implications for practice for conducting the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©*. The first implication would be a re-evaluation of the way the program is conducted in middle schools. This re-evaluation would include how long the program is implemented in the school, the time allocated to the classroom lessons, and teacher commitment to conducting the lessons. School personnel are not necessarily ready for change at the same time (Black & Jackson, 2007). To conduct the *OBPP©* with fidelity, the teachers, administrators, and students need to be committed to applying the program as originally designed over the course of two years. According to Limber (2011), reductions in bullying are seen after eight months and increase after the program implementation for 20 months. Olweus (2007) also argued that three data points should be taken over a course of 20 months for students in grades 5 through 8 to determine the implications of a bully prevention program. The bullying prevention coordinators need to track the developmental changes in the school staff in relation to the implementation of the program. If the majority of the school staff is not implementing the program as it is designed, then it would be expected that the student results from the questionnaire, behavior observations, and pretest-posttest may not show improvements after a two-year implementation. The Olweus Bullying coordinators and the administration collaborate to plan for dedicated time of 45 minutes to conduct the *OBPP©* each week over the course of 26 weeks. Although this schedule is difficult, a

short-term intervention will show minimal results in a middle school and the researcher and coordinators need to determine if it is an accurate representation of *OBPP©* that would be supported by the Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life at Clemson University.

The second implication suggests there is a need to increase teacher participation. The bullying coordinators of the school need to prepare the curriculum for the teachers and provide them with the necessary materials for the lessons, provide them with coaching and support, and assistance when a lesson results in students responding in unusual ways. Gathering data on teacher participation on implementing the *OBPP©* in WRMS would provide administrators and bullying coordinators with measures to determine if the participating teachers are implementing the program with fidelity (Cecil & Molnar-Main, 2015). The researcher would help with developing strategies to help teachers become more effective from these measures. After conducting the program with fidelity, an accurate measure of results by conducting the Olweus Schoolwide Implementation Checklist and the Teacher Implementation Checklist could prove that the participation of the teachers conducting the program correlated to having significant results (Cecil & Molnar-Main, 2015). Without this dedication, schools like WRMS may not receive the full benefits that the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* offers.

The third implication is the need to reevaluate the *OBPP©* to determine if the lessons and the pre- and post-questionnaire accurately address the bullying issues found in WRMS. Research investigations have questioned the use of the *OBPP©* for minority students and communities in poverty (Hong, 2009). WRMS has a higher poverty rate than the neighboring districts. The inclusion classrooms at WRMS are populated by

minority students, immigrant students, and students with disabilities. More research

needs to be conducted to determine if the application of the *OBPP©* needs to be adjusted

to meet the specific needs of students in communities with higher poverty rates and to

meet the needs of at risk students with language barriers and learning disabilities (Hong,

2009). This research could help redesign the program to better meet the needs of students

that are not from middle-class communities.

The fourth implication suggests that a more intensive approach to bullying

prevention and behavior in the inclusion classroom should be conducted to gain benefits

and decrease negative behaviors. Students with learning disabilities have more intensive

needs than the general education student. Students with learning disabilities are at risk for

increased disciplinary actions when behavior modification strategies designed for

students without disabilities are applied to the LD students (Kuchle et al., 2015).

Continued research on programs and strategies that are effective for students with

learning disabilities would be valuable for improving bullying behavior in the classroom.

Investigating the use of intensive programs that work alongside the *OBPP©* to target the

behavioral needs of students with disabilities would help with determining how the

teachers in WRMS could best support the needs of students with learning disabilities

(Sullivan et al., 2017). Functional Behavioral Assessments should be explored for

individualized behavioral needs to help students improve their behavior before they need

to apply a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BiP) (Borgmeier et al., 2015). Tracking the

behavioral changes across all the inclusion classrooms to determine if there are

differences between those students and the regular education students in the school may

reveal behavioral differences in these student populations that is inciteful for future research.

Conclusion

This study resulted in quantitative data that was statistically insignificant and qualitative data that illustrated the varying reactions of students towards the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©*. While the results showed a lack of significance after a 10-week intervention, they provided insight on the difficulties with conducting a bullying prevention program in a class of students that had a high population of students with learning disabilities. The problem of practice, the research questions, and the purpose of the study was reviewed. Then the methods of the research design and the data collections procedures were readdressed. A discussion of the overall results of the study and the data analysis was reviewed. The researchers elaborated on her role in implementing the *OBPP©,* collecting data and analyzing it, and her role as a curriculum leader in WRMS. Additionally, the researcher discussed her reflections on the research process and her philosophy as a leader. Recommendation for future research included evaluating the community's violence prevention programs, collaborating with the available community resources, and the impact of bullying on low-income communities. The action plan suggested a redesign from the one-group pretest-posttest to a single subject research design to measure the behavioral changes for the students identified with "learning disabilities." It also suggested expanding the study to a school-wide program to determine if significant results may occur beyond the intervention group originally studied. This school-wide approach would lead to revising the pre- and post-observation of bullying behavior to match the disciplinary behaviors seen in the school. The final

action is to develop a program that gets the parents involved in the bullying prevention

education that also provides them with community supports. The implication of practice

included a re-evaluation for conducting the *OBPP©* in the middle school, increasing

teacher participation in conducting the program, an investigation on the cultural and

social issues found in WRMS to determine if the *OBPP©* addresses the behavioral needs

of the students, and finding more intensive approaches to bullying behavior for students

with learning disabilities.

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APPENDIX A

BULLYING KNOWLEDGE PRETEST-POSTTEST

(PERMISSION FOR USE BY ADMINISTRATOR AT WRMS AS A FUNDED AND IMPLEMENTED PROGRAM IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT)

DIRECTIONS:

Mark the answer you believe to be correct.

1. What is bullying?

    a. an intentional, negative act, repeated behavior that involves a power imbalance

    b. an unintentional, negative act that isn't repeated behavior

    c. rough-and-tumble play

    d. fighting

2. Which of the following are indirect forms of bullying?

    a. excluding someone from a group or activity

    b. sending nasty messages on social media

    c. spreading rumors and manipulating friends

    d. All of the above

3. How often do you believe students are bullied in schools in South Carolina?

    a. 13 percent of students

    b. 23 percent of students

    c. 33 percent of students

    d. 43 percent of students

4. How often do students participate in bullying?

a. 10 percent bully others

b. 15 percent bully others

c. 20 percent bully others

d. 25 percent bully others

5. Which is the type of bullying that both girls and boys participate in?

    a. physical bullying

    b. social exclusion

    c. nonphysical means

    d. manipulating friends

6. What are the causes of bullying problems in schools?

    a. personality characteristics and reaction patterns

    b. environmental factors—attitudes, routines, and behaviors of adults

    c. attitudes and behavior or relevant peers

    d. All of the above

7. What are the four types of students who tend to be bullied?

    a. submissive victims, passive victims, and provocative victims

    b. docile victims, passive victims, and provocative victims

    c. submissive victims, tame victims, and provocative victims

    d. submissive victims, passive victims, and reactive victims

8. Which is not a characteristic of students who bully?

    a. they have a need to dominate and subdue other students to get their own way

    b. are impulsive and easily angered

    c. if they are girls, they tend to be physically stronger in general and to those they bully

    d. are defiant and aggressive towards adults, including teachers and parents

9. What ways are student affected by bullying?

    a. social contagion

    b. increased sense of individual responsibility

    c. weakening the normal inhibitions against aggression

    d. gradual changes in the view of the victim

10. Which is not a myth of bullying?

    a. very few students are bullied

    b. most bullying is physical in nature

    c. bullying happens more often in school than outside of school

    d. bullying happens more often in large schools and large classes

APPENDIX B

TEACHER OBSERVATION ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR BEFORE/AFTER TREATMENT OF THE *OLWEUS BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM©* LESSONS

(PERMISSION FOR USE BY ADMINISTRATOR AT WRMS AS A FUNDED AND IMPLEMENTED PROGRAM IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT)

Teacher Observation on Student Behavior Before Treatment of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Lessons

Directions: Please list all students and rate each student on the following characteristics listed as they relate to the student's behavior before treatment. Use the numbered scale listed below. In addition, add any extra details that would aid in describing the student's behavior.

1	2	3	4	5

|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|

Not at All   Some of the   All of the Time
                                 Time

	Adjustment Indicators							
Student Name	**Relates well to peers**	**Self-Confident**	**Aggressive toward peers**	**Quiet and withdrawn**	**Complains of Illness**	**Blames others**	**Impulsive actions**	**Lack of empathy**

Teacher Observation on Student Behavior After Treatment of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Lessons

Directions: Please list all students and rate each student on the following characteristics listed as they relate to the student's behavior after treatment. Use the numbered scale listed below. In addition, add any extra details that would aid in describing the student's behavior.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|

Not at All   Some of the   All of the Time
                                                        Time

	Adjustment Indicators							
Student Name	Relates well to peers	Self-Confident	Aggressive toward peers	Quiet and withdrawn	Complains of Illness	Blames others	Impulsive actions	Lack of empathy

APPENDIX C

OLWEUS BULLYING QUESTIONNAIRE© (STUDENT SURVEY)

(Permission for use by administrator at WRMS as a funded and implemented program in the school district.)

PART I

1. Please indicate your grade.

   o 7th
   o 8th

2. Are you male or female?

   o Male
   o Female

3. How do you like school?

   o I dislike school very much
   o I dislike school
   o I neither like nor dislike school
   o I like school
   o I like school very much

4. How many good friends do you have in your class(es)?

   o I have 1 good friend in my class(es)
   o I have 2 to 3 good friends in my class(es)
   o I have 4 to 5 good friends in my class(es)
   o I have 6 or more good friends in my class(es)
   o None

5. How often have you been bullied in school in the past couple months?

   o Haven't been bullied
   o Once or twice
   o 2-3 times a month
   o About once a week
   o Several times/week

6. I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

7. Other students left me out of things on purpose, excluded me from their group of friends, or completely ignored me.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

8. I was hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

9. Other students told lies or spread false rumors about me and tried to make others dislike me.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

10. I had money or other things taken away from me or damaged.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

11. I was threatened or forced to do things I did not want to do.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

12. I was bullied with mean names or comments about my race or color.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

13. I was bullied with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

13a. I was bullied with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on my cell phone or over the Internet (computer).

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

13b. If you were bullied on your cell phone or over the Internet, how was it done?

- o Only on cell phone
- o Only over the Internet
- o In both ways

14. I was bullied in another way.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

15. In which class(es) is the student or students who bully you?

- o In my class
- o Diff. class, same grade
- o In a higher grade
- o In a lower grade
- o In different grades

16. Have you been bullied by boys or girls?

- o Mainly by 1 girl
- o By several girls
- o Mainly by 1 boy
- o By several boys
- o Both boys and girls

17. By how many students have you usually been bullied?

- o Mainly by 1 student
- o By 2-3 students
- o By 4-9 students
- o By more than 9
- o Different students/grades

18. How long has the bullying lasted?

- o 1 or 2 weeks
- o About a month
- o About 6 months
- o About a year
- o Several years

19 Where have you been bullied?

- o Playground/athletic field
- o Hallways/stairwells
- o Class (teacher in room)
- o Class (teacher NOT in room)
- o Bathroom
- o Gym Class
- o Lunchroom
- o Way to and from school
- o Bus stop
- o School bus
- o Somewhere else in school

20. Have you told anyone that you have been bullied in the past couple of months?

- o Been bullied/not told
- o Been bullied/told somebody

Who have you told?

- o Your class teacher
- o Another adult at school
- o Your parent(s)/guardian(s)
- o Your brother(s)/sister(s)

o   Your friend(s)

o   Somebody else

21. How often do teachers or other adults at school try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?

- o   Almost never
- o   Once in a while
- o   Sometimes
- o   Often
- o   Almost always

22. How often do other students try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?

- o   Almost never
- o   Once in a while
- o   Sometimes
- o   Often
- o   Almost always

23. Has any adult at home contacted the school to try to stop your being bullied at school in the past couple of months?

- o   Haven't been bullied
- o   No, not contacted the school
- o   Yes, once
- o   Yes, several times

24. When you see a student your age being bullied at school, what do you feel or think?

- o   Probably deserves it
- o   Don't feel much
- o   Feel a bit sorry
- o   Feel sorry and want to help

25. How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?

- o   Not bullied others
- o   Once or twice
- o   2-3 times a month
- o   About once a week
- o   Several times a week

26. I called another student(s) mean names and made fun of or teased him or her in a

hurtful way.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

27. I kept him or her out of things on purpose, excluded him or her from my group of friends, or completely ignored him or her.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

28. I hit, kicked, pushed, and shoved him or her around, or locked him or her indoors.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

29. I spread false rumors about him or her and tried to make others dislike him or her.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

30. I took money or other things from him or her or damaged his or her belongings.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

31. I threatened or forced him or her to do things he or she did not want to do.

- Hasn't happened
- Once or twice
- 2-3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times/week

32. I bullied him or her with mean names or comments about his or her race or color.

- Hasn't happened
- Once or twice
- 2-3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times/week

33. I bullied him or her with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning.

- Hasn't happened
- Once or twice
- 2-3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times/week

33a. I bullied him or her with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on my cell phone or over the Internet (computer).

- Hasn't happened
- Once or twice
- 2-3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times/week

33b. If you bullied another student(s) on your cell phone or over the Internet (computer), how was it done?

Computational basis: Those who bullied "once or twice" or more according to question 33a.

- Only on cell phone
- Only over the Internet
- In both ways

34. I bullied him or her in another way.

- o Hasn't happened
- o Once or twice
- o 2-3 times a month
- o About once a week
- o Several times/week

35. Has your class or homeroom teacher or any other teacher talked with you about your bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?

Computational basis: Those who bullied "2-3 times a month" or more according to question 25.

- o Not bullied others
- o No, haven't talked with me
- o Yes, they have once
- o Yes, several times

36. Has any adult at home talked with you about your bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?

Computational basis: Those who bullied "2-3 times a month" or more according to question 25

- o Not bullied others
- o No, haven't talked with me
- o Yes, they have once
- o Yes, several times

37. Do you think you could join in bullying a student whom you do not like?

- o Yes
- o Yes, maybe
- o I don't know
- o No, I don't think so
- o No
- o Definitely no

38. How do you usually react if you see or learn that a student your age is being bullied by another student(s)?

- o I have never noticed it
- o I take part in the bullying
- o I don't do it, but find it OK

- o I just watch what goes on
- o I ought to help
- o I try to help

39. How often are you afraid of being bullied by other students in your school?

- o Never
- o Seldom
- o Sometimes
- o Fairly often
- o Often
- o Very often

40. Overall, how much do you think your class or homeroom teacher has done to cut down on bullying in your classroom in the past couple of months?

- o Little or nothing
- o Fairly little
- o Somewhat
- o A good deal
- o Much

APPENDIX D

OLWEUS© CLASS MEETINGS OUTLINE AND SCRIPTS

(Permission for use by administrator at WRMS as a funded and implemented program in the school district.)

Outline

Below is a suggested outline for your first class meeting.

   I. Get the class into a circle.

  II. Explain the purpose of class meetings:

- getting to know each other better
- learning about bullying
- discussing/problem-solving bullying situations
- working together to stop or prevent bullying at school
- talking about other issues of importance to your class

  III. Discuss the benefits of class meetings:

- build a strong class community
- allow everyone to feel heard
- help resolve problems before they become bigger

  IV. Work with the class to discuss the class meeting ground rules:

1. We raise our hand when we want to say something.

2. Everyone has the right to be heard.

3. We let others speak without interrupting (within certain time limits).

4. Everyone has the right to pass.

5. We can disagree without being disagreeable or saying mean things; no "put-downs."

6. When talking about bullying or other problems between students, we don't mention names. However,

it is important that student tell you or another adult (rule 4) if they know or suspect a bullying problem in the classroom. When this rule is presented, you may want to say to the students: "If you know of someone who is being bullied or is bullying others, please talk to me after our class meeting or sometime later."

    V. Introduce the topic of bullying.

   VI. Introduce your school's bullying prevention program.

  VII. Answer any additional questions students may have.

 VIII. Let students know what they can expect at the next class meeting. Thank students for their positive participation.

<div align="center">Script</div>

Estimated time: 40 minutes

Divide this into two meetings if you are working with younger students

Following are directions and a script you may want to follow as you lead your first class meeting. Adjust the language, as necessary, to fit the developmental levels of your students.

Suggested format:

1. Say: Today we are going to try something new. It's called a "class meeting." To do this, let's get our chairs in a circle so we can see each other. We will move the chairs and desks back when we are done. Please be respectful of everyone's belongings when you do this.

2. Students should move their chairs and desks to create space for your class meeting.

3. Say: Thank you. A class meeting is different than what we normally do as a class because we aren't going to be focusing on a school subject. Class meetings, which we will have once a week (or more often for younger

<div align="center">198</div>

students), will be times when we can discuss any number of things that are important to us.

Sometimes I will come up with a topic about something that's going on in our school or in the news, and sometimes you can suggest a topic. One thing that we'll certainly discuss is our school's bullying prevention program, how we are treating each other in this building, and how we can be kinder, more respectful, and more helpful to each other.

4. Share the other purposes for class meetings as described in the class meeting outline. Also, share any other benefits of class meetings as described in the outline.

5. Say: To make sure everyone gets a chance to say his or her opinions and feels comfortable in these class meetings, we will need a few ground rules. What ground rules do you think are needed for everyone to feel comfort- able talking?

6. Let the students come up with their own words that convey these ground rules:

   a. We raise our hand when we want to say something.

   b. Everyone has the right to be heard. Ask: What does that mean? How can we make sure this happens?

   c. We let others speak without interrupting (within certain time limits). Ask: What does that mean?

   d. Everyone has the right to pass. Ask: What does that mean?

   e. We can disagree without being disagreeable or saying mean things; no "put-downs." Ask: What are some examples of put-downs?
      (Remember to include the nonverbal or less obvious put-downs such as eye- rolling, whispering to a neighbor, or laughing at another person's comment.) What are some positive ways to handle disagreements?

199

f. When talking about bullying or other problems between students, we don't mention names. Say: However, it is important to report that bullying is happening. If you know of someone who is being bullied or is bullying others, please talk to me after our class meeting. I will take action to make sure the bullying stops.

7. You may add a few other ground rules that students think are important.

8. After a brief discussion, ask someone to write the agreed-upon rules on poster board so that everyone can see them. Ask a student to be in charge of bringing out the poster for each class meeting. There is also a poster of the ground rules on the Teacher Guide CD-ROM (document 9) that you might want to use instead.

9. Say: Thank you. Let me explain a little more about class meetings. We are here to get to know one another better and to work together better as a group. We can discuss life here at school, such as the way students relate to each other, things you are concerned about here, or improvements you'd like to see happen. Today, I want to start talking about something very important—bullying. What does it mean to bully someone?

10. Allow some discussion with a lot of affirmations.

11. Say: Thank you. Let me give you a definition of bullying: A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself.
Expressed in more everyday language one might say: Bullying is when someone repeatedly and on purpose says

or does mean or hurtful things to another person who has a hard time defending himself or herself.

12. Simplify this definition if you have younger students to: Bullying is when some- one says or does mean things to another person.

13. Say: Here are three more important things to know about bullying:

    a. Bullying is when one student or a group of students are being mean to another student on purpose. The students who bully continue to act mean to the other student even though it hurts the other student's feelings. Can you give examples of times when a student may hurt another student on purpose? Talk briefly about the differences between bullying, rough-and-tumble play, and fighting. See chapter 2 of the Teacher Guide for a description of the differences, or the chart in document 3 on the Teacher Guide CD-ROM. Tailor the information to your students' level.

    b. In bullying, there is an imbalance of power where the students who bully use power in the wrong way—to hurt or make fun of someone. Sometimes a bigger student is picking on a smaller student. Or, a group of students pick on one student. There is a power imbalance, and it is difficult for the student being bullied to make them stop.

  Note: For younger students, you may need to explain what "imbalance" means.

    c. Usually, bullying happens again and again. However, it is important for you to know that if we see you bullying someone even once, you will be asked to stop, and there will most likely be consequences.

14. Ask: What are the different ways students bully each other in this build- ing? Remember, please don't use names.

15. Ask students to give examples. Explain the basic types of bullying—physical or verbal bullying or direct and indirect bullying. Explain these terms or simplify them for younger students. Again, chapter 2 of the Teacher Guide provides back- ground information on this.

16. Say: That's a lot to think about. Think about whether you have ever been bullied by someone. In what ways were you bullied? How did it make you feel? Remember, if you'd like to discuss this in the group, please don't mention any names.

17. Allow for discussion with a lot of affirmations. Be sure other students don't make fun of people as they share.

18. Say: Bullying really hurts those who are bullied. We feel so strongly at our school that bullying should not happen, that we have decided to start a bullying prevention program—the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (or OBPP for short). Everyone in our school, staff and students alike, will be participating in this program. We want to make sure our school is a place where people care about each other and bullying never happens. We will talk more about this at future class meetings.

19. Give students some examples of bullying topics you may discuss at future class meetings (as outlined on pages 72–75 in the Teacher Guide). Let students know that they will first learn the four anti-bullying rules, starting with rule 1, next time. Ask students to share ideas of topics they would like to discuss. If there are no suggestions, tell them to think about it and bring ideas to your next class meeting.

20. Also ask students if they have any questions about class meetings, your class meet- ing ground rules, and so on.

21. Say: Well, we just had our first class meeting. Thanks for trying it out with me. It looks like we'll have a lot to talk about. Think about this topic of bullying and we can pick up our discussion again next time. Bullying is an important topic for us, but we will also be talking about many other topics in our class meetings throughout the school year. Again, we'll be meeting once each week.

22. Say: Please return the chairs and desks to their original location, and be careful and respectful of each other in doing so.

Outline for the Class Meeting about Rule 1

Estimated time:

40 minutes; divide this into two sessions if you are working with younger students

Note:

If you are working with students in middle school/junior high school, you may want to use different examples of bullying, besides teasing. Excluding people from a group, physically hurting someone, or calling them hurtful names are possible examples.

We Will Not Bully Others

1. Get students into their class meeting circle.

2. Review with students the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

3. Say: Today, we'll be talking about the first rule against bullying. Who remembers the first rule we discussed at the kick-off assembly? Rule 1: We will not bully others.

4. Ask: What is bullying?

Encourage students to recall the definition discussed during your first class meeting.

Remind students that bullying is being mean or hurtful on purpose, it happens over and over again, and it involves an imbalance of power. Younger students may only under- stand this imbalance of power as a bigger-smaller issue. With older students, help them understand that there can be an imbalance of power that has to do with social status or power within a peer group too.

5. Show an example of bullying by playing a scenario on the Teacher Guide DVD.

6. When you are done watching the scenario, ask: What are other examples of bullying?

7. Ask: What are the differences between bullying and rough-and-tumble play? Between bullying and fighting?

    You introduced this idea in your first class meeting. Acknowledge that it may be difficult sometimes to know whether a behavior is bullying, rough-and-tumble play, or fighting. (See document 3 on the Teacher Guide CD-ROM for an overview of the differences. Share some of this information with the students.)

    Again, emphasize that bullying is intentional, is repeated, and happens when there is an imbalance of power. Note that bullying and fighting are *both* against your school rules. Rough-and-tumble play (depending on where it takes place and how rough it becomes) also may not be allowed.

8. Discuss the differences between good-natured teasing (or kidding) and bullying. Ask: How many of you have ever teased someone or been teased by someone in a way that was in fun and not bullying? Allow several students to respond.

9. Ask: How many of you have ever been teased by someone in a way that hurt your feelings and was not in fun?

Allow several students to respond.

10. Ask: How can teasing turn to bullying?

    Allow several students to respond. Explain that sometimes teasing goes too far and people's feelings get hurt. Sometimes "it was just for fun" or "I was just kidding" is an excuse that students use when bullying others. If someone's feeling are hurt by teasing or name-calling; then it isn't "in fun"—it's bullying.

11. Emphasize that the student who is targeted generally is entitled to determine if he or she is being treated unfairly or not. Explain that everyone has a right to their feelings, and it's important to let others know that you don't like what they're doing and you expect them to stop.

12. Ask: What are some things you could say if you are being teased or called a name you don't like? Allow several students to respond. Remind them that inappropriate language or retaliation are not positive options.

13. Remind students that if someone tells them to stop a behavior that is hurtful, then they need to stop. When students continue to tease someone when they know it is hurtful, then it becomes bullying.

14. Ask: What could you do if someone is bullying you? Who at school could you tell? Emphasize that dealing with bullying should not be left up to the students themselves. Stress the importance of telling an adult.

15. Summarize your discussion by saying that everyone in your school is learning about this rule. This rule applies everywhere at school. No matter where students are—in this classroom, in the hallways, in the lunchroom, restrooms, or playground/athletic fields. This rule applies everywhere. It also applies on school buses and should be followed as well in students' neighborhoods.

16. Let students know that all school staff will be enforcing this rule. Explain the negative consequences that will occur if bullying is seen or reported. Talk about the positive consequences that will happen if students take a stand against bullying.

17. If time permits, open the meeting up for further discussion. Ask students if they have any questions about what they've just learned.

18. Close the meeting by congratulating students for working hard at understanding this important rule.

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Outline for the Class Meeting about Rule 2

We Will Try to Help Students

Who Are Bullied

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1. Get students into their class meeting circle.

2. Review with students again the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

3. Say: Today, we'll be talking about the second anti-bullying rule. Who remembers the first rule? Rule 1: We will not bully others.

4. Ask: Who can define bullying for us? What are some examples of bullying? Allow several students to respond.

5. Ask: Do you remember the second anti-bullying rule that was talked about at our school's kick-off assembly? Rule 2: We will try to help student who are bullied.

6. Ask: What are some ways you could help students who are being bullied? Allow several students to respond. If they don't mention the following, add them as well:

- Intervene directly by telling the student who is doing the bullying to stop.
- Get help from an adult.
- Be a friend. Stand alongside the person who is being bullied.
- Don't join in on the bullying.

7. Stress that getting help from an adult may be the best option, particularly if students think they may also get hurt by trying to stop the bullying. Explain that if bullying is reported, you and all other school staff will be taking action.

8. Review again the negative consequences for bullying and the positive consequences that will occur for taking a stand against bullying.

9. View scenario 2 on the Teacher Guide DVD if you are working with students in grades 3 or lower, scenario 3 on the Teacher Guide DVD if you are working with students in grades 4–6, or scenario 5 on the Teacher Guide DVD if you are working with students in grades 7 and 8. Ask students to come up with positive ways to handle the situation if they were bystanders. For example, ask students:

   - What would you say? What would you do?
   - How hard would this be to do?
   - How would it make the person who is being bullied feel?
   - Do you think this solution will change the situation?
   - Does this solution fit with our school's rules?

   Note: If students say it would do no good to tell an adult or it would be "tattling," explain that all adults in the school want to know about bullying and will do something about it. Also, emphasize that telling an adult is not "tattling"; it is being a good friend and member of this school.

10. Ask: If you were being bullied, do you think you would want someone to help you? In what ways?
    Note: If students suggest retaliation or violent options, talk about your school rules and why this is not appropriate.

11. Say: To summarize what we've talked about today, there are several ways to help someone who is being bullied. Remember these options the next time you see someone being

bullied. It is important that you do something not only because it is a school rule but also because it's the right thing to do.

12. If time permits, ask if students have any questions or would like to talk through any other concerns.

13. Congratulate the class on working hard to understand how they can help someone who is being bullied.

Outline for the Class Meeting about Rule 3

We Will Try to Include Students

Who Are Left Out

1. Get students into their class meeting circle.

2. Review with students again the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

3. Ask: How have things been going this week in our classroom? Allow several students to respond.

4. Explain that today you are going to talk about the third anti-bullying rule.
Ask: Do you remember the first anti- bullying rule? What is it, and what does it mean? Allow several students to respond.
Rule 1: We will not bully others

5. Ask: Who can remind us of the definition of bullying? What are some examples of bullying?
Allow several students to respond.

6. Ask: What is the second anti- bullying rule?
Rule 2: We will try to help students who are bullied.

7. Ask: What are some ways we can help a student who is being bullied?
Allow several students to respond.

8. Ask: What is the third anti-bullying rule discussed in our school's kick-off assembly? Rule 3: We will try to include students who are left out.

9. Ask: What does this rule mean? Allow several students to respond.

10. Say: Another way to say this rule is that "Everyone should have someone to be with."

11. Say: Think to yourselves, without mentioning names, whether there are students in our school who are often isolated or left out. Does everyone have someone to be with during recess or at lunch?

12. Ask: Why do you think some students don't include those who are alone? What might make including others so difficult? Allow several students to respond. Note that peer pressure to exclude students can be strong.

13. Ask: How can you include classmates who are often left alone at lunch, at recess or breaks, during group activities or other activities both during and outside of school hours?

14. Make a list of the answers students give on a piece of poster board and post the ideas in your classroom. Encourage students to try these ideas out over the next few days. Be sure to reward or praise students who are putting these ideas into action.

15. Say: Some students have a hard time making friends or connecting with others. Why might it be hard for some students to do this?
    Possible answers:
    • Some students are very shy.
    • Some students might not have much practice.
    • Some students may have been hurt by other students and have a hard time trusting others now.

16. Remind students that sometimes it takes patience, encouragement, and courage to help isolated students feel comfortable and safe getting involved.

17. Say: We've come up with some good ways to try to include students who are often left out. I want to remind you to try out these ideas this week. I'll be watching how this goes,

hoping to "catch" you reaching out to those who are often left out.

18. If time permits, ask if students have any questions or would like to talk through any other concerns.

19. Congratulate students on doing a good job in learning how they can follow this important rule.

Outline for the Class Meeting about Rule 4

If We Know That Somebody Is Being Bullied, We Will Tell an Adult at School and an Adult at Home

1. Get students into their class meeting circle.

2. Review with students again the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

3. Ask: How have things been going this week in the classroom? Allow several students to respond.

4. Say: Today, we'll be talking about the fourth anti-bullying rule. What is the first anti-bullying rule?

    Rule 1: We will not bully others.

5. Say: What is the second anti-bullying rule?

    Rule 2: We will try to help students who are bullied.

6. Say: Who remembers the third anti- bullying rule? What does this rule mean?

    Rule 3: We will try to include students who are left out.

7. Ask: Has anyone tried to help include someone who was left out this week? Remind students not to mention names.

8. Ask: What is the fourth and final anti-bullying rule that was discussed in our school's kick-off assembly?

    Rule 4: If we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home

9. Ask: Think for a moment to yourselves . . . which adult(s) at school could you talk to if you or another student is being bullied? Remind students that every adult in your school has pledged to take bullying seriously and to do something about it if they are told it is occurring.

10. Say: Sometimes students believe that telling an adult will make things worse for the person who is being bullied or they think that telling an adult is "tattling."

11. Ask: Why is telling so important? Why is it important to tell an adult at home *and* at school? Allow several students to respond.

12. Explain that this rule is not just about telling an adult when you know that someone else is being bullied, but also about telling an adult if *you* are being bullied.

13. Ask: Do you think that most students who are bullied actually tell someone? Who are they most likely to tell? Explain that a lot of students don't tell an adult when they are bullied, and then the bullying doesn't stop.

14. Ask: Why do you think students who are bullied often don't tell anyone? Allow several students to respond. If students say that adults won't do anything, remind them that now they will at your school.

15. Ask: What about bystanders? How common do you think it is for bystanders to report bullying? Explain that compared to students who experience bullying, even fewer students who witness bullying report it to adults.

16. Ask: Why don't bystanders report bullying more often? Discuss the "bystander effect"—the more witnesses there are, the less likely it is that anyone will get involved and help the student who is being bullied.

17. Remind students that they now have a rule that they must tell an adult if they or someone else is being bullied. Also, stress that telling an adult is not "tattling," but is following the rules.

18. Remind students that everyone in school will be asked to follow this rule, so if you are thinking of bullying others, be aware that an adult will be told and that this adult will take action.

For older students: If you have data from your school's administration of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, tell the class the percentage of students at your school who have told an adult about bullying. Explain that bystanders can play a very important role in stopping and preventing bullying by telling an adult. Remind students that everyone has the right to go to school without being bullied or harassed.

19. Ask: What could we do at our school to make it more likely that students will report bullying? Ask a student to record other students' suggestions. Tell the class that you'll forward their suggestions to your school's Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee.

20. Summarize the discussion by reminding students that telling an adult is not "tattling," but keeping someone safe.

21. Remind students that during class meetings, you have asked students not to use other students' names when talking about bullying. This does not mean you don't want to do anything about bullying. As has been mentioned in your class meeting rules, it is important for students to report bullying, but you encourage them to do so with you individually.

22. Answer any other questions or concerns students may have.

23. Congratulate students on doing a great job understanding how important it is to tell an adult if they or someone else is being bullied.

> (rule 4) if they know or suspect a bullying problem in the classroom. When this rule is presented, you may want to say to the students: "If you know of someone who is being bullied or is bullying others, please talk to me after our class meeting or sometime later."

V. Introduce the topic of bullying.

VI. Introduce your school's bullying prevention program.

VII. Answer any additional questions students may have.

VIII. Let students know what they can expect at the next class meeting. Thank students for their positive participation.

Script

Estimated time: 40 minutes

Divide this into two meetings if you are working with younger students

Following are directions and a script you may want to follow as you lead your first class meeting. Adjust the language, as necessary, to fit the developmental levels of your students.

Suggested format:

1. Say: Today we are going to try something new. It's called a "class meeting." To do this, let's get our chairs in a circle so we can see each other. We will move the chairs and desks back when we are done. Please be respectful of everyone's belongings when you do this.

2. Students should move their chairs and desks to create space for your class meeting.

3. Say: Thank you. A class meeting is different than what we normally do as a class because we aren't going to be focusing on a school subject. Class meetings, which we will have once a week (or more often for younger students), will be times when we can discuss any number of things that are important to us.

Sometimes I will come up with a topic about something that's going on in our school or in the news, and sometimes you can suggest a topic. One thing that we'll certainly discuss is our school's bullying prevention program, how we are treating each other in

213

this building, and how we can be kinder, more respectful, and more helpful to each other.

4. Share the other purposes for class meetings as described in the class meeting outline. Also, share any other benefits of class meetings as described in the outline.

5. Say: To make sure everyone gets a chance to say his or her opinions and feels comfortable in these class meetings, we will need a few ground rules. What ground rules do you think are needed for everyone to feel comfort- able talking?

6. Let the students come up with their own words that convey these ground rules:

   a. We raise our hand when we want to say something.

   b. Everyone has the right to be heard. Ask: What does that mean? How can we make sure this happens?

   c. We let others speak without interrupting (within certain time limits). Ask: What does that mean?

   d. Everyone has the right to pass. Ask: What does that mean?

   e. We can disagree without being disagreeable or saying mean things; no "put-downs." Ask: What are some examples of put-downs?
   (Remember to include the nonverbal or less obvious put-downs such as eye- rolling, whispering to a neighbor, or laughing at another person's comment.) What are some positive ways to handle disagreements?

   f. When talking about bullying or other problems between students, we don't mention names. Say: However, it is important to report that bullying is happening. If you know of someone who is being bullied or is bullying others, please talk to me after our class meeting. I will take action to make sure the bullying stops.

7. You may add a few other ground rules that students think are important.

8. After a brief discussion, ask someone to write the agreed-upon rules on poster board so that everyone can see them. Ask a student to be in charge of bringing out the poster for each class meeting. There is also a poster of the ground rules on the Teacher Guide CD-ROM (document 9) that you might want to use instead.

9. Say: Thank you. Let me explain a little more about class meetings. We are here to get to know one another better and to work together better as a group. We can discuss life here at school, such as the way students relate to each other, things you are concerned about here, or improvements you'd like to see happen. Today, I want to start talking about something very important—bullying. What does it mean to bully someone?

10. Allow some discussion with a lot of affirmations.

11. Say: Thank you. Let me give you a definition of bullying:
A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself.
Expressed in more everyday language one might say:
Bullying is when someone repeatedly and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another person who has a hard time defending himself or herself.

12. Simplify this definition if you have younger students to:
Bullying is when some- one says or does mean things to another person.

13. Say: Here are three more important things to know about bullying:

a. Bullying is when one student or a group of students are being mean to another student on purpose. The students who bully continue to act mean to the other student even though it hurts the other student's feelings. Can you give examples of times when a student may hurt another student on purpose? Talk briefly about the differences between bullying, rough-and-tumble play, and fighting. See chapter 2 of the Teacher Guide for a description of the differences, or the chart in document 3 on the Teacher Guide CD-ROM. Tailor the information to your students' level.

b. In bullying, there is an imbalance of power where the students who bully use power in the wrong way—to hurt or make fun of someone. Sometimes a bigger student is picking on a smaller student. Or, a group of students pick on one student. There is a power imbalance, and it is difficult for the student being bullied to make them stop.

Note: For younger students, you may need to explain what "imbalance" means.

c. Usually, bullying happens again and again. However, it is important for you to know that if we see you bullying someone even once, you will be asked to stop, and there will most likely be consequences.

14. Ask: What are the different ways students bully each other in this build- ing? Remember, please don't use names.

15. Ask students to give examples. Explain the basic types of bullying—physical or verbal bullying or direct and indirect bullying. Explain these terms or simplify them for younger

students. Again, chapter 2 of the Teacher Guide provides back- ground information on this.

16. Say: That's a lot to think about. Think about whether you have ever been bullied by someone. In what ways were you bullied? How did it make you feel? Remember, if you'd like to discuss this in the group, please don't mention any names.

17. Allow for discussion with a lot of affirmations. Be sure other students don't make fun of people as they share.

18. Say: Bullying really hurts those who are bullied. We feel so strongly at our school that bullying should not happen, that we have decided to start a bullying prevention program—the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (or OBPP for short). Everyone in our school, staff and students alike, will be participating in this program. We want to make sure our school is a place where people care about each other and bullying never happens. We will talk more about this at future class meetings.

19. Give students some examples of bullying topics you may discuss at future class meetings (as outlined on pages 72–75 in the Teacher Guide). Let students know that they will first learn the four anti-bullying rules, starting with rule 1, next time. Ask students to share ideas of topics they would like to discuss. If there are no suggestions, tell them to think about it and bring ideas to your next class meeting.

20. Also ask students if they have any questions about class meetings, your class meet- ing ground rules, and so on.

21. Say: Well, we just had our first class meeting. Thanks for trying it out with me. It looks like we'll have a lot to talk about. Think about this topic of bullying and we can pick up our discussion again next time. Bullying is an important

topic for us, but we will also be talking about many other topics in our class meetings throughout the school year. Again, we'll be meeting once each week.

22. Say: Please return the chairs and desks to their original location, and be careful and respectful of each other in doing so.

Outline for the Class Meeting about Rule 1

Estimated time:

40 minutes; divide this into two sessions if you are working with younger students

Note:

If you are working with students in middle school/junior high school, you may want to use different examples of bullying, besides teasing. Excluding people from a group, physically hurting someone, or calling them hurtful names are possible examples.

We Will Not Bully Others

1. Get students into their class meeting circle.

2. Review with students the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

3. Say: Today, we'll be talking about the first rule against bullying. Who remembers the first rule we discussed at the kick-off assembly? Rule 1: We will not bully others.

4. Ask: What is bullying?
Encourage students to recall the definition discussed during your first class meeting.
Remind students that bullying is being mean or hurtful on purpose, it happens over and over again, and it involves an imbalance of power. Younger students may only under- stand this imbalance of power as a bigger-smaller issue. With older students, help them understand

218

that there can be an imbalance of power that has to do with social status or power within a peer group too.

5. Show an example of bullying by playing a scenario on the Teacher Guide DVD.

6. When you are done watching the scenario, ask: What are other examples of bullying?

7. Ask: What are the differences between bullying and rough-and-tumble play? Between bullying and fighting?
    You introduced this idea in your first class meeting. Acknowledge that it may be difficult sometimes to know whether a behavior is bullying, rough-and-tumble play, or fighting. (See document 3 on the Teacher Guide CD-ROM for an overview of the differences. Share some of this information with the students.)
    Again, emphasize that bullying is intentional, is repeated, and happens when there is an imbalance of power. Note that bullying and fighting are *both* against your school rules. Rough-and-tumble play (depending on where it takes place and how rough it becomes) also may not be allowed.

8. Discuss the differences between good-natured teasing (or kidding) and bullying. Ask: How many of you have ever teased someone or been teased by someone in a way that was in fun and not bullying? Allow several students to respond.

9. Ask: How many of you have ever been teased by someone in a way that hurt your feelings and was not in fun?
    Allow several students to respond.

10. Ask: How can teasing turn to bullying?
    Allow several students to respond. Explain that sometimes teasing goes too far and people's feelings get hurt. Sometimes "it was just for fun" or "I was just kidding" is an excuse that students use when

bullying others. If someone's feeling are hurt by teasing or name-calling; then it isn't "in fun"—it's bullying.

11. Emphasize that the student who is targeted generally is entitled to determine if he or she is being treated unfairly or not. Explain that everyone has a right to their feelings, and it's important to let others know that you don't like what they're doing and you expect them to stop.

12. Ask: What are some things you could say if you are being teased or called a name you don't like? Allow several students to respond. Remind them that inappropriate language or retaliation are not positive options.

13. Remind students that if someone tells them to stop a behavior that is hurtful, then they need to stop. When students continue to tease someone when they know it is hurtful, then it becomes bullying.

14. Ask: What could you do if someone is bullying you? Who at school could you tell? Emphasize that dealing with bullying should not be left up to the students themselves. Stress the importance of telling an adult.

15. Summarize your discussion by saying that everyone in your school is learning about this rule. This rule applies everywhere at school. No matter where students are—in this classroom, in the hallways, in the lunchroom, restrooms, or playground/athletic fields. This rule applies everywhere. It also applies on school buses and should be followed as well in students' neighborhoods.

16. Let students know that all school staff will be enforcing this rule. Explain the negative consequences that will occur if bullying is seen or reported. Talk about the positive consequences that will happen if students take a stand against bullying.

17. If time permits, open the meeting up for further discussion. Ask students if they have any questions about what they've just learned.

18. Close the meeting by congratulating students for working hard at understanding this important rule.

Outline for the Class Meeting about Rule 2

We Will Try to Help Students

Who Are Bullied

1. Get students into their class meeting circle.

2. Review with students again the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

3. Say: Today, we'll be talking about the second anti-bullying rule. Who remembers the first rule? Rule 1: We will not bully others.

4. Ask: Who can define bullying for us? What are some examples of bullying? Allow several students to respond.

5. Ask: Do you remember the second anti-bullying rule that was talked about at our school's kick-off assembly? Rule 2: We will try to help student who are bullied.

6. Ask: What are some ways you could help students who are being bullied? Allow several students to respond. If they don't mention the following, add them as well:

- Intervene directly by telling the student who is doing the bullying to stop.

- Get help from an adult.

- Be a friend. Stand alongside the person who is being bullied.

- Don't join in on the bullying.

7. Stress that getting help from an adult may be the best option, particularly if students think they may also get hurt by trying to stop the bullying. Explain that if bullying is reported, you and all other school staff will be taking action.

8. Review again the negative consequences for bullying and the positive consequences that will occur for taking a stand against bullying.

9. View scenario 2 on the Teacher Guide DVD if you are working with students in grades 3 or lower, scenario 3 on the Teacher Guide DVD if you are working with students in grades 4–6, or scenario 5 on the Teacher Guide DVD if you are working with students in grades 7 and 8. Ask students to come up with positive ways to handle the situation if they were bystanders. For example, ask students:

- What would you say? What would you do?
- How hard would this be to do?
- How would it make the person who is being bullied feel?
- Do you think this solution will change the situation?
- Does this solution fit with our school's rules?

Note: If students say it would do no good to tell an adult or it would be "tattling," explain that all adults in the school want to know about bullying and will do something about it. Also, emphasize that telling an adult is not "tattling"; it is being a good friend and member of this school.

10. Ask: If you were being bullied, do you think you would want someone to help you? In what ways?

Note: If students suggest retaliation or violent options, talk about your school rules and why this is not appropriate.

11. Say: To summarize what we've talked about today, there are several ways to help someone who is being bullied. Remember these options the next time you see someone being bullied. It is important that you do something not only because it is a school rule but also because it's the right thing to do.

12. If time permits, ask if students have any questions or would like to talk through any other concerns.

13. Congratulate the class on working hard to understand how they can help someone who is being bullied.

Outline for the Class Meeting about Rule 3
We Will Try to Include Students
Who Are Left Out

1. Get students into their class meeting circle.

2. Review with students again the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

3. Ask: How have things been going this week in our classroom? Allow several students to respond.

4. Explain that today you are going to talk about the third anti-bullying rule.
Ask: Do you remember the first anti- bullying rule? What is it, and what does it mean? Allow several students to respond.
Rule 1: We will not bully others

5. Ask: Who can remind us of the definition of bullying? What are some examples of bullying?
Allow several students to respond.

6. Ask: What is the second anti- bullying rule?
Rule 2: We will try to help students who are bullied.

7. Ask: What are some ways we can help a student who is being bullied?
Allow several students to respond.

8. Ask: What is the third anti-bullying rule discussed in our school's kick-off assembly? Rule 3: We will try to include students who are left out.

9. Ask: What does this rule mean? Allow several students to respond.

10. Say: Another way to say this rule is that "Everyone should have someone to be with."

11. Say: Think to yourselves, without mentioning names, whether there are students in our school who are often isolated or left

out. Does everyone have someone to be with during recess or at lunch?

12. Ask: Why do you think some students don't include those who are alone? What might make including others so difficult? Allow several students to respond. Note that peer pressure to exclude students can be strong.

13. Ask: How can you include classmates who are often left alone at lunch, at recess or breaks, during group activities or other activities both during and outside of school hours?

14. Make a list of the answers students give on a piece of poster board and post the ideas in your classroom. Encourage students to try these ideas out over the next few days. Be sure to reward or praise students who are putting these ideas into action.

15. Say: Some students have a hard time making friends or connecting with others. Why might it be hard for some students to do this?
    Possible answers:
    • Some students are very shy.
    • Some students might not have much practice.
    • Some students may have been hurt by other students and have a hard time trusting others now.

16. Remind students that sometimes it takes patience, encouragement, and courage to help isolated students feel comfortable and safe getting involved.

17. Say: We've come up with some good ways to try to include students who are often left out. I want to remind you to try out these ideas this week. I'll be watching how this goes, hoping to "catch" you reaching out to those who are often left out.

18. If time permits, ask if students have any questions or would like to talk through any other concerns.

19. Congratulate students on doing a good job in learning how they can follow this important rule.

Outline for the Class Meeting about Rule 4

If We Know That Somebody Is Being Bullied, We Will Tell an Adult at School and an Adult at Home

1. Get students into their class meeting circle.

2. Review with students again the purpose of class meetings and the ground rules for their discussion. Hang the class meeting ground rules poster where all the students can see it.

3. Ask: How have things been going this week in the classroom? Allow several students to respond.

4. Say: Today, we'll be talking about the fourth anti-bullying rule. What is the first anti-bullying rule?

Rule 1: We will not bully others.

5. Say: What is the second anti-bullying rule?

Rule 2: We will try to help students who are bullied.

6. Say: Who remembers the third anti- bullying rule? What does this rule mean?

Rule 3: We will try to include students who are left out.

7. Ask: Has anyone tried to help include someone who was left out this week? Remind students not to mention names.

8. Ask: What is the fourth and final anti-bullying rule that was discussed in our school's kick-off assembly?

Rule 4: If we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home

9. Ask: Think for a moment to yourselves . . . which adult(s) at school could you talk to if you or another student is being bullied? Remind students that every adult in your school has pledged to take bullying seriously and to do something about it if they are told it is occurring.

10. Say: Sometimes students believe that telling an adult will make things worse for the person who is being bullied or they think that telling an adult is "tattling."

11. Ask: Why is telling so important? Why is it important to tell an adult at home *and* at school? Allow several students to respond.

12. Explain that this rule is not just about telling an adult when you know that someone else is being bullied, but also about telling an adult if *you* are being bullied.

13. Ask: Do you think that most students who are bullied actually tell someone? Who are they most likely to tell? Explain that a lot of students don't tell an adult when they are bullied, and then the bullying doesn't stop.

14. Ask: Why do you think students who are bullied often don't tell anyone? Allow several students to respond. If students say that adults won't do anything, remind them that now they will at your school.

15. Ask: What about bystanders? How common do you think it is for bystanders to report bullying? Explain that compared to students who experience bullying, even fewer students who witness bullying report it to adults.

16. Ask: Why don't bystanders report bullying more often? Discuss the "bystander effect"—the more witnesses there are, the less likely it is that anyone will get involved and help the student who is being bullied.

17. Remind students that they now have a rule that they must tell an adult if they or someone else is being bullied. Also, stress that telling an adult is not "tattling," but is following the rules.

18. Remind students that everyone in school will be asked to follow this rule, so if you are thinking of bullying others, be aware that an adult will be told and that this adult will take action.

For older students: If you have data from your school's administration of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, tell the class the percentage of students at your school who have told an adult about bullying. Explain that bystanders can play a very important role in stopping and preventing bullying by telling an adult. Remind students that everyone has the right to go to school without being bullied or harassed.

19. Ask: What could we do at our school to make it more likely that students will report bullying? Ask a student to record other students' suggestions. Tell the class that you'll forward their suggestions to your school's Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee.

20. Summarize the discussion by reminding students that telling an adult is not "tattling," but keeping someone safe.

21. Remind students that during class meetings, you have asked students not to use other students' names when talking about bullying. This does not mean you don't want to do anything about bullying. As has been mentioned in your class meeting rules, it is important for students to report bullying, but you encourage them to do so with you individually.

22. Answer any other questions or concerns students may have.

23. Congratulate students on doing a great job understanding how important it is to tell an adult if they or someone else is being bullied.

APPENDIX E

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

August 18, 2017

Dear Parent or Guardian:

My name is Mrs. Erika Patterson. I am an English teacher at [WRMS] and I teach your child on Team 8-4. I am attending the University of South Carolina to pursue a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction. Part of my program is to conduct a research study in the classroom.

I am conducting a research study on the impact of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program©* to determine its impact on behavior and bullying in the classroom. Specifically, I am interested in how students perceive bullying and gain an understanding of preventing bullying in school after a series of Olweus class meetings. I plan to collect data through a survey, assessment, and discipline on your student and am asking for your permission to include your child in this research study. This study has previously been approved by [principal's name] and the Assistant Superintendent, but I would appreciate permission from you to include your child in this study.

Your child's participation will involve responding to a survey on bullying, which is a 40-question survey regarding their experiences with bullying in school. I will be facilitating classroom meetings about how to prevent and recognize bullying as well as asking them questions about their experiences in school related to bullying. I believe student experiences in school can always be improved upon, and that young teenagers need ways to identify when bullying is occurring in their school environment. In this study, I hope to provide strategies to help them navigate the world around them.

If you or your child chooses not to participate, there will be no penalty. It will not affect your child's grade, treatment, services rendered, and so forth, to which you or your child may otherwise be entitled. Your child's participation is voluntary and he/she is free to withdraw from participation at any time without suffering any ramifications. The results of the research study may be published, but your child's name will not be used. Data collected will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone. I will destroy all data within one year of completing this study.

If you have any questions concerning this study or your child's participation in this study, please feel free to contact me at [phone number of school] or erikap@email.sc.us.
Sincerely,

Erika Patterson
White Rose Middle School
ELA 8/English I Honors
Doctoral Candidate, University of South Carolina
By signing below, I give consent for my child to participate in the above-referenced study.
Parent's Name:_____ Child's Name:_____
Parent's Signature:_____
Student's Signature:_____