

PROGRAM PROPOSAL TO PREVENT BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

by

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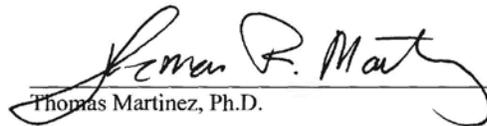
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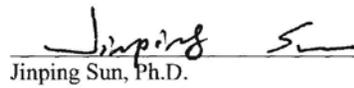
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Program Proposal to Address Bullying In Schools

By Yvonne Armendariz

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## *Executive Summary*

The purpose of this research study is to design a program proposal to address bullying in schools. Bullying issues are no longer viewed as isolated events that only occur at school, nor is bullying considered to be an experience that is simply a part of childhood. Bullying has now, overtime, come to be viewed as a serious public problem not only for children at school but also for all people of all ages. In recent years, bullying has attributed to various widely publicized tragedies such as: suicides, murders, and school shootings. The long and short term effects of bullying include: chronic emotional problems, absences at school and work, academic problems, PTSD, anxiety, and increased risk for substance abuse, and increased risk for adolescence and adulthood violence. Bullying does not only affect the victim and the perpetrator, it affects an entire community.

There are many reasons why people bullying and previous studies have suggested that one main reason why an individual exhibits aggressive behaviors is due to a lack of social skills. Since bullying issues have become so prevalent within our schools, it is imperative that schools provide a safe environment for all students and implementing social skill programs are effective strategies at reducing bullying problems among students. When bullying behaviors are addressed school attendance improves, school crimes are reduced, and students overall feel more safe.

## ***CHAPTER 1: Introduction***

In recent years, bullying has come to be recognized as a significant problem for millions of adolescents worldwide. As a result of various events related to bullying incidents, society has come to view bullying as a social problem and now schools, parents, and community members must learn how to address and respond to this issue. Recent studies have suggested that there is a strong connection between violence and lack of social skills (Bladry, 2003). According to Smith & Low (2013), in households where children were not taught particular social skills such as respect, empathy, and problem solving skills, those children were more inclined to demonstrate violent behaviors towards others, especially their classmates. Bullying and aggressive behaviors in children should no longer be taken lightly because it has become one of the most common forms of violence. This form of violence allows the most powerful individuals to dominate the weak. It is imperative to understand and recognize the link between the lack of social skills and bullying because once it is recognized; procedures to intervene and respond to bullying behaviors can be addressed. A lack of intervention implies that it is acceptable behavior but bullying is pervasive and potentially harmful to both bullies and their victims which is why I feel this issue needs to be addressed beginning with social skills training in elementary schools.

There are a variety of reasons why children exhibit bullying behaviors towards others. One of the main reasons why people bully is because it gives a sense of entitlement and superiority over others. Bullies tend to lack empathy, control over their impulses, have hot-headed personalities, have difficulty conforming to rules, and lack the proper social skills.

Parents of bullies, especially in households with violence, often use aggressive discipline methods and have firm punishments for their children. Additionally, peer rejection and taunting are other reasons one might bully others.

Why has bullying issues become so important within our society recently? The reason why bullying is a massive social issue is because it not only affects the victim and the perpetrator, it affects an entire community. The consequences are far – ranging from lower attendance and student achievement to increased violence and juvenile crime, for both perpetrators and their victims. In addition, bullying behaviors can be possible indicators to future adult violence. Since bullying issues have become so prevalent within our schools, it is imperative that schools provide a safe environment for all students and have all staff trained on anti-bullying prevention strategies. According to Fox & Boulton (2005), increasing implementing social skill programs are effective strategies at reducing bullying problems among students. When bullying behaviors are addressed school attendance improves, school crimes are reduced, and students overall feel more safe.

### *Definition of Terms*

As bullying has emerged, as both a growing social concern and a safety concern, there is a strong need to conceptually define the term “bullying.” One of the ongoing challenges in addressing, preventing, and responding to bullying in schools is having a common definition of the term that is used universally. Bullying often refers to various aggressive repeated behaviors towards others; however there is no concrete definition as to what exactly those behaviors are

because there is much variance among schools, non-profits, Federal and State agencies, and individuals.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the term bullying is defined as “unwanted aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and that is repeated or has the potential to be repeated overtime.” Additionally, bullying is defined by Stopbullying.gov as “unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.” Although there is a slight variance among definitions, the core of the definition as it will be used in this study is as follows: bullying is repeated unwanted aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves power imbalance.

### *Statement of the Problem*

In recent years bullying has come to be recognized as a significant social problem for millions of adolescents worldwide and it has become one of the most common forms of violence in our society today. It disturbs a student’s opinion of school as a safe environment, disrupting their education on every aspect. Bullying is a serious and increasingly common problem for children of all ages and it is also one of the most widely practiced forms of aggressive behaviors. It allows the most powerful of individuals to dominate the less powerful.

There are a variety of causes for bullying. One of the main reasons why people bully is

because it gives a sense of entitlement and superiority over others. Bullies tend to not be empathic towards others, lack control over their impulses, and not have the proper social skills. Parents of bullies, especially in households with violence, often use aggressive discipline methods and have firm punishments for their children. Peer rejection and taunting are other causes of bullying. Children who bully tend to be: impulsive, have hot-headed personalities, have difficulty conforming to rules; and have a positive attitude towards violence.

In a recent study by Wolke, Copeland, Angold & Costello (2013) they found that there are long-term effects of that affect victims as they age. Researchers found that victims as adults were more likely to drop out of high school, have low self-esteem, live in poverty, have financial problems, and more likely to be terminated from their job.

### *Purpose of the Study*

In recent years, there has been rising interest on the subject of bullying and bullying intervention and prevention strategies. The purpose of this study is to recommend a program to address and respond to bullying in schools by implementing a school wide social skills program to aid in bullying prevention and intervention efforts. This paper will analyze how prevention and intervention strategies can reduce (overtime) bullying incidents and propose implementing social skills curriculum into the education system for bullying prevention and intervention since early intervention in childhood can significantly reduce the effects of bullying. The following will be examined:

- 1) examined the effects of bullying and how it can affect the individual and community

- 2) examined the impact of implemented prevention strategies within school
- 3) design and propose a social skills programs that can help address and decrease bullying incidents; and,
- 4) design and propose a social skills program that schools can use to respond to and prevent bullying within their existing school budgets

### *Importance of the Study*

It is imperative to understand and recognize how bullying affects both the victim and the perpetrators because once it is recognized; methods to address and respond to those behaviors can be taken. According to Fox & Boulton (2005), there is a strong connection between children who lack social skills and bullying and once we begin to understand how they relate, we as a society can begin to address and reduce bullying violence within our communities. By teaching children social skills on how to cope with their feelings, children can learn how to effectively solve problems without violence. The information of this study is important to all schools and people associated with the educational system, as well as parents, advocates, community members, and politicians.

Schools should provide a safe learning environment to all students as well as providing protection from danger within their control so each student has an opportunity to learn new information. Although bullying behavior is very common within schools, it is not acceptable behavior. This type of aggressive behavior can be prevented through a variety of prevention strategies, however the educational system must have an active interest in curbing bullying issues

at school, in addition to trying to bring awareness and teach prevention strategies to all students, staff and administration.

The results of this study will help educators consider various practices on how to address and respond to bullying issues within their schools. It will help them understand the importance of teaching children social skills and techniques that can be used to help children solve their problems and issues without aggression, anger, or violence. The research will assist others interested in this field because it will offer valuable information on the most effective way to manage and deal with bullying behaviors and occurrences.

This research can be of value to the public because it brings awareness to bullying issues and informs others of the effects of bullying and how using proper social skills can help address and reduce bullying incidents. More importantly, this information can inform the public on the importance of addressing bullying issues before it becomes a widespread social epidemic.

## *Chapter 2: Review of Literature*

The reason bullying has become a significant social problem is because it affects everyone, either directly or indirectly. According to the Department of Justice, bullying “often occurs out of the presence of adults or in front of adults who fail to intercede, and has long been considered an inevitable and, in some ways, uncontrollable part of growing up.” Since the 1999 Columbine High School shooting in Littleton, Colorado and other similar tragedies throughout the United States, bullying has become a significant social problem because it is considered to be the underlying issue leading to those tragic events. Over the last ten years, the reported amounts of bullying incidents have significantly increased, so much so that within the media on any given day there is a story related to the subject matter.

Another reason why bullying has become a massive social problem in America is because it has led many people to take their own lives. Bullying is an important topic, especially among school administrators, because it affects nearly 7% to 35% (Baldry, 2003) of all students in the United States and because it has become more intensified due to the use of the internet and social media. Bullying behaviors are highly common among children worldwide but according to the U.S. Department of Education, nearly 160,000 children each day will miss school because they are terrified of being bullied at school.

Since 2000, there has been over 100 reported teen suicides in America linked to bullying (CDC). Each victim claimed that they were repeatedly tormented by the perpetrator(s) either verbally, physically, or both. Each person was bullied, for being different from their peers,

whether it was physically, sexually, or socially. They were victimized because their peers could not accept them for who they were and as a result, those teens choose to end their lives because they could no longer take the abusive mistreatment.

According to Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello (2013) “victims of childhood bullying, including those that bullied other, were at increased risk of poor health, wealth, and social-relationship outcomes in adulthood”. Some of the common effects victims experience are mental and psychological problems, lower academic achievements, lower school attendance, poor self-esteem, lack of motivation, depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders compared to children not victimized by bullies. Additionally for children who bully others, they are at higher risk of “substance use, academic problems, and violence in adolescence and adulthood” (Stopbullying.org).

The individual that is affected the greatest is the bully-victims, children who are both victims of bullying and also engage in bullying others. Bully-victims experience dual effects and appear to be the most troubled individual. According to a study on the “Long-term Effects of Childhood Bullying” (Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013), bully-victims tend to be “impulsive, easily provoked, low in self-esteem, poor at understanding social cues, unpopular with peers, tend to come from dysfunctional families, and have pre-existing emotional problems”. In addition to all the effects bullies and victims face, bully-victims have an increased risk of being diagnosed with a psychiatric illness in adulthood. Overall, the long and short term effects of bullying are significant. Understanding how those effects affect the individual, the school, and the community is necessary in order to fully understand bullying. Once people begin to understand how bullying affects the individuals involved, measures can be taken to address and reduce incidents at school.

There are various short and long-term effects of bullying that affect the victim, the bully, and society. For the victim, the consequences are far – ranging from lower attendance and student achievement and for the bully, their aggressive behaviors can lead to increased violence, juvenile crime, and can be possible indicators to future adult violence. For society, the consequence for bullying leads to higher crime rates.

In a recently new study on the “Adult Mental Health Consequences of Peer Bullying and Maltreatment in Childhood” (Lereya, Copeland, Costello, & Wolke, 2015), “the long-term effects of being bullied by other kids are worse than being abused by an adult’. The study found that children in the United States that are victimized by bullies were four times more likely to have mental health issues as adults compared to victims of child abuse (Lereya, Copeland, Costello, Wolke, 2015). The same study also found that English children who were victims of bullies were seventy percent more likely to experience depression or practice some form of self-harm than compared to children who suffered child abuse” and American children “were nearly five times more likely to be diagnosed with anxiety if they were bullied, than if they were abused” (Lereya, Copeland, Costello, Wolke, 2015). These effects of bullying are indicators that bullying should be taken more serious in our schools and within society because the effects are damaging to the victim and is developing into a serious mental health issue within America.

There are multiple underlying issues of bullying but recent research suggests that repeated exposure to family violence at home is also another reason why children bully (Baldry, 2003). We all know that children will mimic what they learn at home, and if they are continuously witnessing violence within the home, the chances of them repeating those behaviors towards

others are high. Previous studies have also suggested that if males witness their male role models engaging in aggressive behavior towards others, they are more than likely to engage in similar behaviors on others they view as being weak. Therefore, the cycle of violence and aggressive behaviors continues.

The cycle of violence continues because neither do the perpetrator nor the victim know how to stop it. If bullies are learning aggressive behavior from home there is a possibility they never learned the appropriate social skills from home, therefore the cycle of violence will continue because they (the perpetrator) knows no different. Bullies were most likely never taught how to be empathetic towards others, the importance of respecting authority or elders, how to be respectful towards others, how to solve problems without the use of violence, how to accept responsibility, and how to accept others when they are different. Social skills are attributes and aptitudes that allow people to interact well with one another, without proper social skills people will not have positive human interaction.

Although bullying is considered to be part of the childhood experience, incidents have evolved to be much more than a common experience. In addition to implementing bullying prevention strategies into their existing safety plans, it is necessary for schools to also implement strategies that address the present issues at school. When schools become involved on all levels of bullying prevention, students feel safer within the environment. Perception is key to aiding in bullying prevention at schools. When students perceive their administrators, teachers, staff, and other students as being supportive, they are more inclined to seek help when involved in bullying incidents or when witnessing others being bullied. According to a recent study (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010),

when schools are actively engaged in preventing, addressing, and reducing bullying their support becomes a valuable strategy for engaging students in the prevention efforts as well. The impact of implemented prevention strategies within school are great because studies have shown that over time prevention strategies will reduce bullying incidents at school.

Since bullying issues are complex, it is imperative that government agencies and our educational system work together to on prevention strategies that are aimed at responding to bullying incidents and aimed at implementing bullying prevention strategies. There are a variety of prevention strategies that schools can implement, the first being training school administration, teachers, and staff on how to respond to bullying incidents at their school. Researchers Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio, & Salmivalli (2014), found that teachers are effective tools at reducing bullying if they exhibit an interest in prevention strategies. The study also found a reduction of bullying behaviors when both teachers and students work together. Implementing anti bullying policies and procedures within school safety plans will allow for victims of bullying to feel safe at school and comfortable knowing that their educational system will provide protection from a bully if needed.

In addition to including anti-bullying policies and procedures in school safety plans, social skill trainings for all school administration and teachers, schools should also implement bullying prevention programs for their students in the form of social skill building curriculum in the classroom. Together, these anti-bullying strategies can promote a safe learning environment for both students and staff. Overtime, anti-bullying prevention programs are effective at reducing

bullying behaviors while addressing the needs of the students, staff and community (O'Brennan, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2014).

In order to change the environment at school, teachers must teach their students that bullying behaviors are not appropriate or acceptable behaviors and they must also enforce consequences for those exhibiting bullying behaviors, while protecting the victims at the same time. Recent studies suggest that students “with higher levels of bullying performed worse academically” (Stom, Thoresen, Wentzel-Larsen, Dyb, 2013) for all those involved: victim, perpetrator, and the bystander. It affects “the social environment of a school, creating a climate of fear among students, inhibiting their ability to learn, and leading to other antisocial behavior” (CDC).

How can social skills programs within the education system assist in anti-bullying prevention efforts? According to Smith & Low (2013), students who learn a “core set of social and emotional skills” become better prepared to handle challenges and “thrive in both social and learning environments”. The same study also found that schools could use social emotional learning to build students skills and encourage positive attitudes, which tends to contribute to bullying prevention. As mentioned previously, bullies tend to lack the proper social skills to help them address the challenges they face. In another study regarding the important of social emotional learning researchers found that “to effectively manage peer challenges, students need to be able to accurately assess social situations and respond in thoughtful ways” (Smith & Low, 2010). Without the proper social skills, children will misinterpret social cues and mishandle the

situation they are facing. Research has also found that social learning programs can teach students productive problem solving skills that will help them with peer conflict resolutions, cooperating with others, and peer disagreements (Smith & Low, 2010).

Social emotional learning (SEL) is a vital instrument that can be used to respond and prevent bullying. When students feel safer at school, students will not leave the school, thus saving the school money they receive from the state. According to Goldweber, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw (2014), when students perceive that their school environment is unsupportive of bully prevention strategies, it is more likely that bully behaviors are higher at those schools. Although bullying behavior is very common within schools, it is not acceptable behavior. This type of aggressive behavior can be prevented and the educational system must have an active interest in preventing bullying behaviors in order to reduce bullying behaviors among their students.

In addition to providing social skills programs, previous research suggests that school administration and staff should take an active approach at addressing bullying issues and behaviors at their schools (McCormac, 2014) by being an advocate and bringing awareness to the subject. According to McCormac (2014), for schools that tolerate bullying behaviors, the environment of the school becomes unsafe and unhealthy because bullying affects everyone: victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. The majority of all bullying incidents go unreported and undetected by school administration, staff, and parents. In a recent study, researchers found that only about 36% of the victims reported being bullied compared to 64% of the students who did not report their victimization (Petrosino, Guckenbug, DeVoe, & Hanson, 2010). McCormac

(2014) studied bullying intervention programs over a four-year period and found that there was a decline on incidents after implantation of prevention programs at school. Additionally, the same study found that after school wide intervention programs were implemented, students reportedly felt that their school environment felt safer compared to before. The study also noted that students who perceive that they are supported and protected at school, appeared to be more engaged and actively sought out help with they were bullied or witnessed bully incidents (Eliot, M., Cornell, D., Gregory,A., & Fan, X., 2010).

Without intervention, bullying incidents and behaviors at school will only increase and contribute to a poor school environment (Bauer, Lozano, & Rivara, 2007). For this reason, it is imperative for schools to take immediate action against bullying and implement ongoing prevention strategies that will address the issue. The school culture and environment is a vital role in the war against bullying. According to researchers, “in order to battle bullying, it can be important for student to have teachers whom they see as taking an active stand against bullying” (Veenstra, Lindenber, Huitsing, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2014). The role of the school is crucial to addressing the issue because when students perceive that they have the support of the school, they tend to feel safer at school.

Bullying and threats are believed to be linked to the most extreme bullying cases, school shootings. In multiple school shootings, it was later discovered that the shooters had reported being repeatedly bullied over a period of time and that they had made threats against their perpetrator(s). This is of importance because when schools teach students the importance of reporting incidents and threats, overtime students will feel more comfortable and help with prevention efforts at the school

level. The above research indicates that bullying affects every aspect of society and without help; it will only expand into a bigger social problem. Implementing bullying prevention within school safety plans is not enough to address and reduce bullying issues at school. In addition to already existing prevention efforts, schools need to teach social skills in the classroom beginning at the elementary level. Unfortunately, many children are now being raised without learning proper social skills and age without knowing essential coping methods. Proper social skills, such as empathy, respect, emotional management, problem solving, are all extremely important to being a well-rounded individual.

### *Chapter 3: Program Proposal*

The most common form of violence in schools is bullying and it is problematic because it disturbs a student's opinion of school as a safe environment, disturbing their education on every aspect. It allows the most powerful individuals to dominate the less powerful. Bullying is a serious and increasingly common problem for children of all ages and it is also one of the most widely practiced forms of aggressive behaviors. Bullying prevention has become a vital part of our education system. Schools are aim to provide a safe haven for each student from harm and provide them with the safest learning environment. State Governments are now requiring schools to include anti-bullying polices and procedures within their safety plans but more strategies must be implemented in order to address and reduce bullying issues at they occur.

The purpose of this study is to recommend a program proposal to address bullying in schools by implementing a school wide social skills program to aid in bullying prevention by addressing bullying incidents as they occur in an effort to reduce bullying behaviors at school. This paper will analyze how prevention strategies can reduce (overtime) bullying indents and propose implementing social skills curriculum into the education system for bullying prevention since early intervention in childhood can significantly reduce the effects of bullying. The following will be examined:

- 1) examined the effects of bullying and how it can affect the individual and community
- 2) examined the impact of implemented prevention strategies within school
- 3) design and propose a social skills programs that can help address and decrease bullying

incidents; and,

4) design and propose a social skills program that schools can use to respond to and prevent bullying within their existing school budgets

The purpose of my study is to propose how schools can implement a social skills program that will address bullying incidents at their schools without increasing their existing budget. Bullying is a significant important topic to address because bullying does not only affect the victim and the perpetrator; it affects the entire community at large. Bullying has become a severe problem in the school environment and efforts to address, reduce, and prevent bullying is the responsibility of every individual in the school setting.

The following program proposal is constructed from the social learning theory. It is very imperative for all students to feel safe and protected in their learning environments, which is why it is vitally important to have all schools implement prevention programs, policies, and strategies that are used to prevent, reduce, and respond to bullying behaviors among students. Bullying is not acceptable behaviors and schools need to be more aggressive at addressing the issue at their schools. Once bullying behaviors are addressed school attendance improves, school crimes are reduced, and students overall feel more safe.

Current bullying prevention strategies tend to only bring minimal awareness to the subject matter. This program is different from others because it teaches students how to use social skills to make positive decisions for the challenges they may face. This program will focus on having schools implement social skills programs that teach students social and emotional skills that

will help them with peer conflict resolutions, cooperating with others, and peer disagreements (Smith & Low, 2010).

First, in order for this program to be successful, all school administration and teachers need to be properly trained social emotional learning (SEL) skills. SEL is “the systematic development of a core set of social and emotional skills that help children more effectively handle life challenges and thrive in both their learning and their social environments” (Ragozzino & O’Brien, 2009).

Second, social emotional learning curriculum needs to be implemented in the classroom because it “teaches social-emotional competence and helps to create a physically and emotionally safe school environment and increases students’ scores on standardized achievement tests” (Ragozzino & O’Brien, 2009). According to research by Ragozzino and O’Brien (2009), SEL research based program, Second Step has “easy-to-teach classroom lessons for preschool through eighth grade to enhance students’ social-emotional competence through a focus on building SEL skills. It focuses on core social-emotional skills that are particularly important to bullying prevention, including empathy, emotional management, and social problem solving. In addition, embedded within these lessons are topics such as friendship building and how to be assertive, which are also key skills in bullying prevention.”

According to a previous study, it is one of the evidence-based programs that provide “universal interventions at the school and classroom levels with a selective intervention aimed at students involved in bullying events” (McCormac, 2010). Lastly, in order to have a successful program all individuals (school administration, teachers, and staff) must constantly and

consistently reinforce the social and emotional skills learned by reminding students about opportunities to use those skills and also provide positive reinforcement when they (students) do.

The SEL program proposal will only consist of a week-long intensive training for school administration, teachers, and staff, program implementation, and quarterly trainings thereafter to reinforce the information first learned. This is a four-step phase.

The first step will be to teach all school administration on proper social skills, how to teach them to students of all ages, how to reinforce the social skills, and how to reinforce positive behavior. This step will also teach on the importance of everyone working together as a team and understanding the importance of implementing and reinforcing the program. The second phase, implementing the program into the classroom, will need to occur at the beginning of the each school year. From the first day of school, teachers need to begin teaching social skills in the classroom. Students will know no different, but what they will know is that their school is a safer environment because they are all working together for the better good of each student.

The third phase will consist of parental involvement. This program will only be successful if parents support and provide encouragement to their student. In this step, monthly parent meetings will be held to teach parents the skill set that is being taught to the their children at that time. The idea is to inform the parents on what is being taught in the classroom and in return parents will reinforce the behavior at home. The final step, step four consists of quarterly trainings for school administration, teachers, and staff that will reinforce the information learned at the initial intensive training.

The quarterly trainings will also give more in-depth training on strategies of how to implement and teach a particular social skill if someone is experiencing difficulties.

Addressing and reducing bullying incidents at school does not need to affect the existing school budget, all that is needed is the vested interest and commitment from school administration. The role of the school is vitally important and it is imperative to use research-based strategies in addressing and responding to bullying within their existing school budgets. Below are approaches school administrators can take to address the issue without having to utilize the school budget:

- **Culture of the school.** Administration must focus on the current culture of the school. If the culture is not a positive and safe environment, they must change it. The culture of the school determines how safe and connected students will be.
- **Raise awareness.** Raise awareness of “bullying” to help motivate administration, teachers, staff, and students about the dangers involved. Raising awareness will motivate others to take action and in return, reduce incidents.
- **Obtain support from stakeholders.** It is necessary to have the support from stakeholders, school administration/staff/parents/board members/community, to have a successful and effective anti-bullying campaign. Gaining the support and commitment from stakeholders will give the program the reinforcement needed to address and reduce bullying at schools, home, and within the community.
- **Integrate prevention strategies with existing prevention efforts for other issues.** Bullying is not the only social issue schools are addressing and trying to control at school,

therefore school administrators can coordinate, collaborate, and integrate bullying prevention efforts with other existing prevention efforts already in place to save on time, energy, and money.

- **Provide training.** Currently schools have ongoing staff/teacher meetings, incorporate bullying prevention efforts within those meetings and address certain issues can be effective. Discussing what bullying is, the effects of bullying, how to effectively respond to incidents, current school policies and procedures, and how to report incidents can be addressed at the trainings/meetings. Ongoing training plays a dynamic role in addressing the issue.
- **Be consistent.** School administration, teachers, and staff must be prepared to respond to bullying incidents. Additionally, they must also be consistent with the consequences. This will illustrate to all students that bullying will not be tolerated and that there are appropriate consequences for those actions.
- **Increase adult supervision during recess and lunch periods.** Bullying incidents tend to occur when people are isolated or “no one is looking”. Increasing adult supervision on school grounds by having administration and staff take staggering lunches will allow more supervision and fewer incidents without having to hire more supervision.
- **Be committed.** Bullying prevention is an ongoing effort that requires all people to be active and involved. There is no “end date” for bullying but with prevention efforts in place and with time, student’s behaviors should begin to positively change and bullying

incidents should begin to decrease due to the culture of the environment slowly changing for the better.

Additionally, the State of California has other opportunities in which to integrate bullying prevention efforts into the schools without affecting the budget. In October 2011, United States Congress passed Assembly Bill 1156 to address the question as to how schools can implement bullying prevention within their existing budgets. AB 1156 mandates each school district in the State of California to include anti bullying prevention policies and procedures in their safety plans and requires bullying prevention training to be provided by both the Department of Justice and State Department of Education. Under this bill, all costs associated with bullying prevention efforts and training will be reimbursed by the State. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education has an anti-bullying prevention training available at no cost to all school administrators titled, "Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment in Our Nation's Classrooms," which can assist the school with addressing and responding to bullying prevention efforts at their school by teaching teachers and school administrators how to create a safe school and classroom environment and provides training on understanding bullying and how to effectively and safely intervene.

Budget commitments should be minimal, if any, as most costs associated with bullying prevention programs will be absorbed by the US Department of Education. Schools, parents, community members should be involved on all levels of addressing bullying issues, as this issue is prevalent within our society. There are many websites and programs that offer free information, materials, and at times trainings on how to prevent, address, reduce, and implement

bullying prevention programs. These sites offers information how on to respond not only as a victim but also as a bystander and informs the reader on the hazards of being a victim, the risks involved, the short and long term effects, and overall, how bullying affects the individuals involved, the school, the community, and society.

### *Chapter 4: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusion*

This program proposal can be successful in helping to address and reduce bullying at schools if schools implemented a social skills program and followed steps on how to effectively change the culture of the environment. There is a significant need for all children to have installed in them basic social skills that will enhance their life. Unfortunately, some children are not taught these skills at home and it has become the burden of the school to provide each student with essential core values and social skills to help them not only become a better student, but also a more positive individual. In doing so, the social skills can help address and reduce bullying issues at school in addition to possibly preventing unhealthy adolescence and adult behavior.

#### *Summary*

The social skills program proposed can be a great program in addressing and reducing bullying if schools implement it. This program will help teach students proper social skills that are necessary to be a well-rounded citizen. It can help by teaching students the tools they need to be proactive in the fight against bullying and also teach them the importance of being a positive contributing citizen. Additionally, the program will help students feel safe at school, which in turn will bring up attendance. With the help of social skills, students will learn how to respect others and authority, the importance of respecting property, how to be empathic towards others, how to solve problems without use of violence, and how to accept responsibility when necessary. This positive behavior learned from the program will help children grow into worthy adults by

reinforcing the golden rule: treat others as you would like to be treated.

This program is based on the social learning theory which teaches students positive behavior by using learned social skills. With the combination of the social skills program and other bullying prevention strategies, bullying incidents will be addressed and reduced overtime.

The student, the school, and the community will greatly benefit from this program. By teaching students how to be better individuals, behaviors at school, home, and within society can hopefully begin to become more positive. As a result of teaching children core skills that will enhance their life, they will in return hopefully teach their offspring the same skills, hopefully shifting the cycle of violence in a positive direction.

In order for any prevention strategy to be successful, the program must be fully supported by stakeholders. In this case, this program must have the full support of all school administration and staff, parents, and the community. Parents play a vital role in this program and without their support on all levels; this program will not be successful. Parents must reinforce the skills at home so that children can learn how to apply those skills effectively in all areas of their life.

School administration, school staff, parents, and students must all receive the proper training on SEL and how to use those skills to address their behaviors. Additionally, the training must be consistent and concise in order for the program to be successful.

There is a need to have an expert within the community that can properly train all school administrators and staff and offer ongoing trainings. However, this requires ongoing funding and with the current budget restraints, it is difficult to acquire funding.

### ***Recommendations***

It is recommended that schools implement a school wide social skill program to aid in bullying prevention by addressing and responding to bullying incidents within the classroom and on campus. In addition to existing school safety plans, it is recommended that all schools beginning with elementary implement an ongoing school wide anti-bullying campaign that includes implementation of a social skills program to help address and prevent bullying incidents. Overtime, with all administration, teachers, counselors, and staff reinforcing social skills: bullying incidents should be reduced.

This program can help address and reduce bullying behaviors and hopefully prevent them (students) from becoming problematic youth and adults. This program will help students learn proper behavior and teach them how to act appropriately towards others, which they will be able to apply in all areas of their lives. Ultimately this program will impact the people that need it the most: the children with behavioral issues, the children being bullied, and the children that are the bullies and allow for them to change the cycle of violence within their means.

### ***Future Research***

Future research is needed to understand how social skills can help prevent, address, and reduce bullying as well as other behavioral problems. It is recommended that school districts become more involved with State Public Health Agencies and the U.S. Department of Education on their campaign against bullying since these agencies play a significant role in bullying prevention. By utilizing those agencies, schools can take advantage of their expertise and have

access to free prevention materials and trainings. State agencies are now beginning to expand their role in bullying prevention efforts and as a result, they will seek opportunities to be involved in prevention efforts so they can research evidence-based practices, procedures, and policies.

A second recommendation is to have improved collaboration and coordination among stakeholders. Bullying is a major public concern and in order to fully address issue, mega collaboration must occur. Schools need to implement parent meetings in which they teach them the same information they are teaching the students. If parents begin to understand the definition of bullying, how it affects their child and others, and the long and short term effects of being a victim, bully, and a bystander, in turn, parents will become more engaged. In addition to parent information sessions, schools also need to address the community by hosting an annual town hall meeting.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, children are very adaptive and will mimic behaviors that are learned. Unfortunately, not all students are taught certain essential skills that allow for them to be better individuals. As a result, children who lack social skills are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors towards others and use aggression and violence as a tool to dominate others. It should never be the responsibility of the school to teach children certain behaviors but the ugly truth is that too many adults lack those qualities and they are teaching their children the wrong skill set or lack of. If adults lack proper social skills, how are they going to teach their children? In this case, the cycle of violence and bullying continues and grows because bad behavior is encouraged

rather than discouraged.

Unfortunately many children are not being taught these valuable skills at home, from a young age, and if learned at a young age, there is a possibility that they can be shaped into having positive behavioral skills, being empathetic, learning how to address problems without violence, learning how to communicate better and effectively, learning about the importance of being a contributing member of society, and most of all learning appropriate acceptable behavior.

Bullying issues are nothing new for schools and society. Bullying has become a significant public problem because of the recent tragedies that have occurred because of it. The problem with bullying is that in most cases, either the victim or the predator, or in some cases both, lack proper social skills. In order to prevent aggressive behavior, there needs to be more commitment from the school, participation from parents and students, and engagement from the community. In addition, it is recommended that schools provide ongoing social skills programs to all students to address behavior problems.

Addressing bullying issues by implementing social skills programs in addition to existing prevention efforts at schools will help change the culture of the environment. Social skills programs will help address current behavior issues while preventing future aggressive unwanted behaviors, and student will begin to feel safer at school. Overtime with ongoing prevention efforts, bullying issues should decline due to the zero tolerance policies in place and the use of positive social skills among students. Social skills are defensive element against bullying. When children have strong social skills, they have higher self-confidence, more esteem, and are more resilient when in difficult situations such as bullying.

Additionally when individuals have good social skills they are less likely to bully others because they know how to address situations without use of intimidation, aggressive behavior, and other bullying tactics.

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**Appendix A – IRB Letter**



## CSU Bakersfield

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**Date:** 06 April 2015

**To:** Yvonne Armendariz, PPA Student

**cc:** Thomas Martinez, Public Policy & Administration  
Paul Newberry, IRB Chair

**From:** Steve Suter, Research Ethics Review Coordinator

### Subject: Protocol 15-45: Not Human Subjects Research

Thank you for bringing your protocol, "**Program Proposal to Address Bullying in Schools**", to the attention of the IRB/HSR. On the form, "*Is My Project Human Subjects Research?*", received on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, you indicated the following:

I want to interview, survey, systematically observe, or collect other data from human subjects, for example, students in the educational setting. **NO**

I want to access data about specific persons that have already been collected by others [such as test scores or demographic information]. Those data can be linked to specific persons [regardless of whether I will link data and persons in my research or reveal anyone's identities]. **NO**

Given this, your proposed project will not constitute human subjects research. Therefore, it does not fall within the purview of the CSUB IRB/HSR. Good luck with your project.

If you have any questions, or there are any changes that might bring these activities within the purview of the IRB/HSR, please notify me immediately at 654-2373. Thank you.

Steve Suter, University Research Ethics Review Coordinator