

**A Case Study of Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities in  
Middle School**

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THESIS

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to students with disabilities. I have learned from them, have been humbled, inspired, and challenged by them so many times in my professional journey as a school psychologist. They deserve our outmost respect, kindness, and action. Today, more than ever before, we need to do more to protect these vulnerable youth from becoming targets and recipients of bullying. As researchers, policy makers, and educators, I believe we have a professional and moral obligation to engage in the complex endeavor called *bully prevention and intervention* to create safe and inclusive schools for all students, but especially those with disabilities.

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AT

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BASC	<i>Behavior Assessment System for Children</i>
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
BP-PBS	<i>Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support</i>
BSI	Behavior System Index
BVS	<i>Reynolds Bully-Victimization Scale</i>
CATS	<i>Child-Adolescent Teasing Scale</i>
CBCL	<i>Child Behavior Checklist</i>
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children
CICO	Check-In/Check-Out
CP	Cerebral Palsy
EBD	Emotional/Behavioral Disorders
EL	English Learners
ELA	English Language Arts
ERC	<i>Emotional Regulation Checklist</i>
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FBA	Functional Behavior Assessment
HBSC	Health Behavior in School-Aged Children
HF-ASD	High-Functioning Autism
HI	Hearing Impairment

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS** (continued)

HRSA	Health Resources and Services Administration
ID	Intellectual Disabilities
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IRB	Institutional Review Board
ID	Intellectual Disability
ISBE	Illinois State Board of Education
LD	Learning Disabilities
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Supports
NASP	National Association of School Psychologists
NSCH	National Survey of Children's Health
OBPP	Olweus Bullying Prevention Program
ODR	Office Discipline Referral
OHI	Other Health Impairments
PBFS	<i>Problem Behavior Frequency Scales</i>
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
PB-PBS	<i>Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support</i>
PHSCS	<i>Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale</i>
PSVA	(Illinois) Prevent School Violence Act
SAIG	Social Academic Instructional Group
SASED	School Association for Special Education in DuPage County

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (continued)

SBL	“Stop, Breathe, Leave”
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SLI	Speech and Language Impairment
SLP	Speech and Language Pathologist
SSBS	<i>School Social Behavior Scales</i>
SS-SSTP	<i>Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention</i>
SWIS	School-Wide Information System
SWAT	“Stop, Walk, and Talk”
SWD	Students with Disabilities
SW-PBS	School-Wide Positive Behavior Support
TFI	Tiered Fidelity Inventory
VI	Visual Impairment
WOST	<i>Wider Outcomes Survey for Teachers</i>

## SUMMARY

Bullying disproportionately affects students with disabilities (SWD; Bear, Mantz, Glutting, Yang, & Boyer, 2015; Blake, Lund, Zhou, Kwok, & Benz, 2012; Estell et al., 2009; Little, 2002; Rose & Espelage, 2012; Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2011; Van Cleave & Davis, 2006). SWD who are at increased risk for bullying perpetration and victimization require more intensive interventions than their peers without disabilities. Although there is a large number of bullying prevention and intervention programs for youth in general education, less is known about effective interventions for SWD (Houchins, Oakes, & Johnson, 2016; Rose et al., 2011). Increasingly, bullying prevention and intervention efforts need to be embedded within a multi-tiered preventive framework such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS; Bradshaw, 2013, 2015; Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek; 2010; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Ross & Horner, 2009, 2014). PBIS provides foundations for the multi-context and multi-tiered approach to bullying prevention, particularly for SWD (Bradshaw, 2013; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Sugai & Horner, 2009; Sullivan, Sutherland, Farrell, & Taylor, 2015).

Thus, the purpose of this case study was to examine and describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization of SWD in a middle school that has adopted a multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention. To examine bullying prevention and intervention for SWD from the perspective of multiple constituents, this case study involved six general education teachers, five special education teachers, three related services providers, three school administrators, and a PBIS leader/coach. Data were obtained from multiple sources to ensure triangulation including interviews, documentation, and physical artifacts.

## **SUMMARY** (continued)

Results from this study revealed that the PBIS framework allowed school professionals to establish and promote a positive school climate. The universal emphasis on teaching and reinforcing school-wide expected behaviors, particularly respectful behavior, was one of the key components of bullying prevention and intervention within the PBIS framework. Additionally, a school-wide bullying prevention and intervention program was integrated within the PBIS framework. School personnel reported believing that bullying involvement of SWD was comparable to that of their peers without disabilities; however, the existing data collection provided insufficient information about the level of bullying involvement of SWD. Given the fluidity of the PBIS framework, SWD at risk for bullying tended to have easy and quick access to targeted Tier 2 interventions such as Check-In/Check-Out (CICO), social academic instructional groups (SAIG), and brief Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP). More intensive and individualized interventions focusing on social and emotional skills related to chronic bullying perpetration or victimization were limited. Implications for future research are discussed.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a pervasive, multi-faceted, and intractable problem that affects schoolchildren around the world. Some scholars have posited that bullying is a public health issue (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014; Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2015; Strabstein & Leventhal, 2010) that underscores the seriousness and urgency of bullying prevention and intervention. While the extant literature indicates that bullying affects all children, students with disabilities (SWD) are likely to be overrepresented in the bullying dynamic (Bear et al., 2015; Blake et al., 2012; Estell et al., 2009; Little, 2002; Rose & Espelage, 2012; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011; Van Cleave & Davis, 2006). Some evidence suggests that bullying prevalence among SWD may be twice as high as it is among general education youth (Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011), less is known about how school personnel prevent and intervene, particularly with bullying of students with high-incidence disabilities.

### **The Definition of Bullying Behaviors and Roles Among School-Aged Youth**

According to Olweus, a pioneer in bullying research, “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students” (2001, p. 5). In this widely cited definition, Olweus (1993, 2001) indicated that these negative actions against one student or group of students are intentional and based on the imbalance of emotional, psychological, physical, or social power. He noted that this imbalance in strength and power leads to asymmetric relationships. Researchers concur that bullying is different from fighting or arguing between or among students of the same physical, social, emotional strength, and power (Cornell & Bandyopadhyay, 2010; Nansel et al., 2001; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011; Sullivan, Cleary, & Sullivan, 2004; Swearer, Siebecker,

Johnsen-Frerichs, & Wang, 2010). Bullying, unlike other forms of aggression, includes repeated acts although researchers agree that, in certain contexts, a single occurrence of negative actions can be characterized as bullying (Olweus, 1993; Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

Bullying is a complex construct that is challenging to measure and operationalize. Lack of consistency in measuring the bullying construct is a serious issue that researchers try to resolve to advance the knowledge base about bullying prevalence, risk and protective factors, and the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions (Chalamandaris & Piette, 2015; Gladden et al., 2014; Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Swearer, Siebecker, et al., 2010; Vaillancourt et al., 2008). Recently, in an effort to increase the accuracy and consistency of measuring the magnitude, scope, characteristics, and consequences of bullying and to determine what works to prevent bullying, the U.S. Department of Education, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) have collaborated to establish a uniform definition that states the following:

Bullying is any **unwanted aggressive behavior(s)** by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an **observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated.**

Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational **harm** (Gladden et al., 2014, p. 7).

Bullying perpetration and victimization can be performed via direct modes (i.e., negative actions that occur in the presence of the victim: pushing, hitting, or harmful verbal communication) and indirect modes (i.e., negative actions not directly communicated to the victim: spreading rumors at school or communicating them electronically; Gladden et al., 2014). Bullying behavior can be expressed in many ways, but, in general, there are four main types that

include physical bullying, verbal bullying, relational bullying, and damage to property (Gladden et al., 2014). Physical bullying is the most overt and easiest to detect, as the perpetrator uses physical force against the victim (Gladden et al., 2014). This may involve behaviors such as hitting, kicking, pushing, punching, scratching, tripping, or spitting (Olweus, 1993).

Verbal bullying refers to oral or written communication that is negative and harmful to the victim, and it may include name-calling, repeated threats stated verbally or in writing, offensive hand gestures, racist remarks, spiteful teasing and taunting, cruel and abusive remarks, and inappropriate sexual comments (Gladden et al., 2014; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011). Furthermore, relational bullying refers to more covert bullying behaviors that result in damaging the victim's reputation and relationships (Gladden et al., 2014; Olweus, 1993; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011). This may include spreading harmful rumors and lies, intentionally isolating or excluding from a group, and posting derogatory comments or embarrassing images in a physical or electronic space (Gladden et al., 2014). Finally, damage to property is another type of bullying that occurs when the perpetrator damages the victim's property intentionally, repeatedly, and to cause harm, and this may include taking the victim's property and refusing to give it back, destroying the victim's property in his or her presence, and deleting personal electronic information (Gladden et al., 2014).

Gladden and colleagues (2014) noted that bullying may occur in multiple contexts or locations, including at school, during extracurricular school activities, on the school bus, in the victim's neighborhood, and on the Internet. Electronic bullying or cyberbullying is a more recent phenomenon (Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011), and Gladden and colleagues noted that it refers to a context or location in which bullying occurs. Thus, cyberbullying may be expressed as verbal, relational, or property bullying (e.g., sending mean messages or rumors via text or

email, posting embarrassing pictures, videos, fake profiles on social networking sites, or deleting one's personal information (Gladden et al., 2014)

SWD and their peers without disabilities may participate in bullying as bullies, victims, and bystanders. These roles present unique protective and risk factors that need to be addressed through targeted prevention and intervention; yet, they are not static (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Rose, Allison, & Simpson, 2012; Rose, Simpson, & Moss, 2015). On the contrary, bullying roles are dynamic and fluid, and they tend to fall on a continuum, which makes bullying a systemic problem and calls for involving the whole school community in prevention and intervention (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

Bullies tend to be a relatively heterogeneous group of children with regard to their demographic, social, or physical characteristics. Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al. (2011) noted that bullies might have both desirable traits (e.g., popular among peers, good social skills, and high academic performance) and undesirable traits (e.g., low self-esteem, poor social skills, poor academic performance, and internalizing and externalizing problems).

Cook et al. (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of empirical studies examining the predictors of bullying, and their findings confirmed that typical bullies demonstrated externalizing behaviors; however, they also had some internalizing problems. Bullies exhibited challenges in the areas of both academic achievement and social competence, held negative beliefs about others and themselves, experienced difficulties resolving problems with others, and tended to be negatively influenced by their peers. Additionally, bullies experienced conflict within their family environments and inadequate parental monitoring. Bullies also tended to possess negative views of their school atmosphere and were impacted by negative community factors. Although peer rejection was significantly related to the bully status in studies focusing

on younger children, this meta-analysis indicated that bullies were more likely to be accepted by their peers when they entered adolescence.

Defining and understanding the role of a victim is equally complex. Sullivan and colleagues (2004) pointed out that any student could be a victim. “The random, indiscriminate, and hidden nature of bullying means that no one is immune” (p. 13). The empirical evidence suggests that there are two types of victims: passive and provocative (Griffin & Gross, 2004; Olweus, 1993; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011). Cook and colleagues’ (2010) meta-analysis found that victims had internalizing problems; however, they could also demonstrate externalizing behaviors. Importantly, internalizing behavior was a significant predictor of being a victim for adolescents but not for younger children. Furthermore, victimized children were likely to have poor social skills and had trouble resolving social problems. They tended to hold negative self-related cognitions and experienced rejection and isolation from their peers. Among contextual variables associated with the victim status, victims were more likely to live in negative families, schools, and communities.

Some victimized children are at risk for developing bullying behaviors to combat bullying they have experienced, and they are considered to play a role of bully-victims. Cook and colleagues (2010) found that bully-victims exhibited both internalizing and externalizing problems, experienced academic challenges, lacked social skills and social competence, had trouble problem solving social situations, held negative attitudes and beliefs about themselves and others, experienced rejection and isolation from their peers, and tended to be negatively affected by peers in their group.

Children and adolescents who observe bullying directly or know about it are called bystanders, and bullying is frequently assessed from their perspective (e.g., Espelage, Holt, &

Henkel, 2003; Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi, & Franzoni, 2008; Graham, Bellmore, & Juvonen, 2003). Bystanders can act to support bullying or stop it from happening (Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011). This may include bystanders who are (a) followers and join the bully in perpetration, (b) supporters who reinforce the bully indirectly, (c) passive supporters who support the bully without taking an open stand, (d) disengaged onlookers who become spectators but do not help either the bully or the victim, (e) possible defenders who do not endorse the bully's behavior but have trouble intervening, and (f) defenders who help the victim (Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011). Taking bystanders into consideration, one realizes that bullying can involve a large number of students (Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011).

### **Overrepresentation of Students with High-Incidence Disabilities in Bullying and its Impact**

Although the bullying phenomenon has been studied internationally since the 1970s, the focus on SWD is relatively recent (Blake, Zhou, Kwok, & Benz, 2016; Hartley, Bauman, Nixon, & Davis, 2015; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011; Rose, Swearer, & Espelage, 2012). In their seminal literature review on bullying victimization and perpetration of SWD, Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al. found 32 empirical studies, of which seven were conducted in the United States. The overarching finding from these empirical investigations was that SWD experience higher rates of verbal, physical, and relational bullying than their peers without disabilities.

Importantly, none of the reviewed studies investigated bullying interventions for SWD. There is a proliferation of anti-bullying program evaluations (e.g., Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Barbero, Hernandez, Esteban, & Garcia, 2012; Evans, Frazer, & Cotter, 2014; Ferguson, San Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez, 2007; Lee et al., 2015; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008; Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012; Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). Nevertheless, there is limited information about bullying

prevention and intervention for SWD (Blake et al., 2016; Hartley et al., 2015; Houchins et al., 2016; Rose et al., 2011; Rose, Espelage, Aragon, & Elliott, 2011).

SWD attending American schools are served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), and in 2013 they comprised 8.5% of all children and adolescents ages 6-21 (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, 2015). SWD include children and adolescents with highly diverse academic and social-emotional/behavioral needs. According to the IDEA, children and adolescents may be found eligible for special education services under 13 disability categories. In the fall of 2013, the majority of students ages 6 through 21 served under the IDEA were students with high-incidence disabilities, including 39.5% of students with specific learning disabilities (LD), 17.9% of students with speech and language impairments (SLI), and 6.0% students with emotional disturbance (ED). Additionally, there were 13.8% of students with other health impairments (OHI) receiving special education services, 8.2% of students with autism, and 7.1% of students with intellectual disabilities (ID).

A review of information on the prevalence of bullying and its detrimental effects for SWD became the impetus for this dissertation study, underscoring its significance. It is important to understand how the level of bullying prevalence and the potential for long-lasting effects for SWD compares to their peers without disabilities. A widely cited national survey, the *Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC)*, conducted in the United States in 1998, found that 29.9% of youth in general population in Grades 6 through 10 reported that they were involved in bullying, 13% of these students bullied others, 10.6% were victimized, and 6.3% experienced both perpetration and victimization (Nansel et al., 2001).

In comparison, the *National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH)*, a telephone survey in which researchers collected information from a member of each household most familiar with the child's health, found that 54.6% of children with behavioral, emotional, or developmental problems between the ages of 6 and 17 years were bullied, 55.1% bullied others, and 28.2% were victimized and bullied others (Van Cleave & Davis, 2006). Importantly, significant associations were found between having behavioral, emotional, or developmental problems and bullying victimization and perpetration.

More recently, Hartley and colleagues (2015) examined the prevalence and impact of self-reported victimization in a national sample drawn from 31 schools in 12 states during the 2009-2010 school year. A total of 363 SWD and 2,874 students without disabilities in Grades 5-12 participated in this study. SWD reported significantly higher levels of physical harm, emotional harm, and psychological distress than their peers without disabilities. Specifically, 22.6% of SWD had experienced daily physical harm within the past month, as compared to 11.4% students in the general education population. Moreover, 44.0% of SWD had endured emotional harm, as compared to 22.6% of students in general education.

The prevalence of bullying is harmful. For example, Hartley and colleagues (2015) found that 7.5% of SWD, compared with 5.3% of students in general education, experienced severe psychological distress and felt unsafe and threatened due to bullying. Although verbal bullying and relational bullying were the most common forms of victimization among both SWD and students in general education, SWD were 1.56 times more likely to be physically threatened and 1.41 times more likely to be physically hurt than their peers without disabilities.

Additionally, while students in general education were more likely to be physically bullied in

elementary school than in middle school and high school, there was no grade-level effect for SWD, and physical bullying persisted throughout their educational careers.

Moreover, Rose, Simpson, et al. (2015) conducted a descriptive study to examine the prevalence of different forms of bullying perpetration and victimization in a large sample of 1,183 SWD and 13,325 students without disabilities in Grades 6-12. These students attended 17 middle schools, six high schools, and two alternative schools in five school districts in the southwestern area of the United States. With respect to bullying perpetration, 15.8% of SWD vs. 13.5% of their peers without disabilities reported high involvement when “high” was defined as one standard deviation above the total population mean score. Additionally, 15.4% of SWD endorsed high involvement in relational perpetration versus 10.0% of students without disabilities. Similar patterns emerged with respect to victimization, as 21.6% of SWD versus 14.5% of their peers without disabilities reported having experienced a high level of direct victimization (verbal and physical). Additionally, 16.4% of SWD reported being cybervictims in comparison to 11.5% of students without disabilities, and 22.2% of SWD had been victimized relationally in comparison to 13.4% of their peers without disabilities. Further analysis confirmed that bullying prevalence among students with ED, ID, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), OHI, and LD, respectively, exceeded the rates found for students without disabilities.

Outcomes for youth affected by bullying indicate that bullying is a public health issue (Gladden et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2015; Sraibstein & Leventhal, 2010). In addition to lower academic achievement (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2010), bullies, victims, and bully-victims are more likely to develop psychosomatic problems and have difficulty with psychosocial adjustment such as trouble making friends, poor relationships with classmates, and increased loneliness (Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Nansel et al., 2001). Bullying perpetration and victimization

are also associated with later suicide attempts (Klomek et al., 2009). Results from the Safe Schools Initiative Final Report, a collaborative project between the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, indicated that of the 41 attackers involved in 37 incidents of targeted school violence between 1974 and 2000, 71% had been bullied, persecuted, or injured prior to the attack (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002).

Investigations that have explored the perspectives of SWD provide important insight into how bullying affects them. Zeedyk, Rodriguez, Tipton, Baker, and Blacher (2014) found that a significantly higher percentage of adolescents with high-functioning autism (HF-ASD; 76%) and ID (80%) compared with their peers without disabilities (47%) revealed that bullying had affected them emotionally. Furthermore, Heiman, Olenik-Shemesh, and Eden (2015) examined the impact of cyberbullying and found that adolescents with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) who were victims of cyberbullying or had witnessed cyberbullying reported lower self-efficacy and more emotional loneliness than students without ADHD. Also, adolescents with LD in Heiman et al.'s study who were educated both in general education settings and special education classes reported that cybervictimization had significantly affected their ability to concentrate on learning. Those adolescents with LD who attended general education classes reported that cybervictimization had significantly affected their achievement. Similarly, boys with ADHD who were interviewed about their experiences with being bullied revealed that they felt sad, lonely, angry, and embarrassed (Shea & Wiener, 2003). All in all, the higher risk of bullying prevalence among SWD, in comparison to their peers without disabilities, and the lack of research addressing interventions for their unique needs underscore the significance of investigating *how* schools prevent and intervene with bullying.

## **Bullying Prevention and Intervention for SWD in American Schools**

The educational and political landscape at the federal, state, and local levels related to bullying has drastically changed since the tragic shootings at Columbine High School in 1999, and the focus on bullying prevention and intervention in American schools has exponentially increased over the years (Stuart-Cassel, Bell, & Springer, 2011). In fact, in the last 15 years, the U.S. Department of Education issued four guidance documents (see U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2013; and U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014) that reminded schools of their legal and educational obligation to address bullying.

Furthermore, at the state level, it is important to note that all 50 states and the District of Columbia passed anti-bullying laws between 1999 and 2015 (Yell et al., 2016). Anti-bullying laws tend to vary in their scope (Cascardi, Brown, Iannarone, & Cardona, 2014). However, more than half (63%) of state anti-bullying laws require schools to implement some type of universal anti-bullying prevention (e.g., staff development); 26% of state statutes require secondary prevention and 50% of them require tertiary intervention (Edmondson & Zeman, 2011). Most state anti-bullying laws encourage or require local educational agencies to adopt anti-bullying policies and address bullying in a systematic way ([www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov), 2010).

Many schools implement whole-school anti-bullying programs to comply with national and state legislation, yet the overrepresentation of SWD in bullying and the detrimental effect on their social-emotional and behavioral functioning provide compelling evidence that they need more intensive and tailored supports (Bradshaw, 2013; Cook et al., 2010; Houchins et al., 2016;

Rose, Espelage, & Monda-Amaya, 2009; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Rose, Simpson, et al., 2015). As mentioned earlier, relatively few investigations have examined specific prevention or intervention programs for SWD (Houchins et al., 2016; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011; Rose, Simpson, et al., 2015). However, an increasing number of bullying experts contend that bullying prevention and intervention efforts need to be embedded in a multi-tiered framework of prevention (Blake et al., 2016; Bradshaw, 2013, 2015; Cook et al., 2010; Rose et al., 2009; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Ross & Horner, 2009, 2014).

One study has shown that schools on average utilize 14 different strategies or programs to address violence and to ensure a safe learning environment (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001). It is challenging to implement such a wide array of programs and practices effectively; thus, researchers are advocating for integrating bullying prevention with other school-wide prevention efforts, particularly PBIS (Blake et al., 2016; Bradshaw, 2013, 2015; Cook et al., 2010; Rose, Allison, et al. 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Ross & Horner, 2009, 2014). Within this multi-tiered preventive model, students have access to universal primary prevention, secondary supports, and tertiary interventions. As part of primary prevention, a whole-school program is typically implemented that aims to change the prevailing norms related to bullying and to improve school climate. Secondary interventions include a variety of curricular activities focusing on discussions and role playing in order to increase prosocial behaviors and peer support for students at higher risk for bullying perpetration and victimization. As part of tertiary interventions, students at highest risk for bullying involvement receive individualized supports consisting of FBA, social skills training, and self-determination and self-advocacy skills training.

In sum, SWD are likely to be overrepresented within the bullying dynamic as bullies, victims, and bully-victims. Although research on bullying prevention and interventions for SWD is limited, American scholars have begun advocating for embedding anti-bullying efforts in a multi-tiered framework, which would provide SWD with school-wide, classroom-wide, and targeted individualized prevention and intervention. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to explore how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying among SWD in a school with a multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Bullying disproportionately affects SWD and while there is a plethora of bullying prevention and intervention programs for youth in general education, less is known about effective interventions particularly for youth with high-incidence disabilities. Scholars contend that students who are at increased risk for bullying perpetration and victimization require more intensive interventions than their peers in general education, and a multi-tiered framework of bully prevention and intervention has been posited as an effective approach for SWD. Thus, this study was designed to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying of SWD in a middle school that has adopted a multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention. Because bullying peaks in early adolescence (Pellegrini & Long, 2002), a middle school provided an ideal setting for a case study of bullying prevention and intervention for SWD. Furthermore, since bullying is a systemic problem (Polanin et al., 2012; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007), it was important to explore bullying prevention and intervention for SWD from the perspective of various school personnel who serve in different roles, including general education teachers, special education teachers, related services personnel, and school administrators. Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1. How does the context of a multi-tiered framework in the middle school affect the implementation of different bullying prevention and intervention elements for SWD?
2. How do different school personnel respond to incidents of bullying perpetration and/or victimization of SWD in the middle school within a multi-tiered framework?
3. What are the similarities and differences within and across school personnel with respect to various bullying prevention and intervention elements utilized as part of their roles within a multi-tiered framework?
4. How do different school personnel intensify prevention and intervention for SWD in the middle school within a multi-tiered framework?

### **Significance of the Study**

In response to the recent call for embedding anti-bullying interventions within a multi-tiered framework, a study exploring the nuances of how school personnel address bullying in a middle school that adopted this approach is particularly timely. Students with high-functioning disabilities may be at higher risk for bullying, as compared to general education youth. Thus, it was crucial to examine how different school personnel attempted to intensify and individualize prevention and intervention efforts for students with high-functioning disabilities within a multi-tiered system. Results from this study offer a broad description of school-wide, secondary, and tertiary interventions designed to prevent and reduce bullying for students with high-functioning disabilities.

Much of what is known about the bullying phenomenon has been advanced through quantitative inquiry (Chalamandaris & Piette, 2015; Hong & Espelage, 2012). Qualitative methodologies have been underutilized (Chalamandaris & Piette, 2015; Patton, Hong, Patel, & Kral, 2015; Thornberg, 2011; Torrance, 2000). However, studies employing quantitative inquiry

do not contextualize how anti-bullying programs are implemented or why some of them yield negative outcomes (Chalamandaris & Piette, 2015). In an effort to complement findings from quantitative inquiry, this study employed a single case study design. By exploring how different adults who fulfill different roles prevent and intervene with bullying of SWD, this investigation provided a context for understanding some challenges school personnel encountered when embedding bullying prevention and intervention within a multi-tiered framework. Ultimately, results from this study described how school personnel enacted bullying prevention and intervention for SWD in a school with a multi-tiered framework of prevention.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A well-developed theory helps researchers organize and explain facts about human development, and it leads them to develop research questions or generate new knowledge (Green, 1989). As Green (1989) pointed out, a theory is like a window through which a scientist views human nature. It provides a template or lens for understanding human nature and unless facts are nested in a theory, they have no meaning or scientific value. Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory of human development offers one such window through which it may be possible to see the complexity of bullying (Espelage, 2014; Espelage & Swearer, 2010; Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Swearer, Wang, Maag, Siebecker, & Frerichs, 2012). According to Bronfenbrenner:

The ecology of human development is the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life span, between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives, as this process is affected by relations obtaining within and between these immediate settings, as well as the larger social contexts, both formal and informal, in which the settings are embedded (p. 1).

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory has been adapted by bullying researchers and is regarded as the socio-ecological framework (Espelage, 2014). Its key premise is similar to Bronfenbrenner's original definition of human development. As noted above, Bronfenbrenner proposed that human development occurs within different contexts that include microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The interaction between a child and his or her contexts is bi-directional and reciprocal (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). It is important to note that each ecological context is nested in the next one and interconnected. The socio-ecological framework proposes that bullying behavior does not take place in a vacuum; bullying is an intricate and complex phenomenon, and it results from the reciprocal interaction between children and their social environments (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). This intricate interaction between multiple social and environmental contexts may promote, maintain, or prevent bullying among school-aged children.

The key components of the socio-ecological framework include microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem comprises the most immediate settings, structures, and locations in a student's life that may exacerbate or buffer against bullying involvement. Therefore, the microsystem includes the student's age, gender, race, disability, family, peers, and teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). The different components of a child's microsystem interact and intersect one another creating the mesosystem. This dynamic interaction may include parent-child relationships, peer interactions, teacher-student relationships, and home-school collaboration. Furthermore, there are three additional systems that indirectly but significantly impact bullying victimization and perpetration. The exosystem includes social contexts and structures that indirectly affect a child's development, such as school climate, staff professional development, local school board, and neighborhood

violence (Espelage, 2014). The macrosystem is regarded as a cultural blueprint and comprises the prevailing cultural and societal norms, beliefs, practices, legislation, and policies that may encourage or discourage bullying. The last system within which all preceding systems are embedded includes the chronosystem, and it refers to the level of consistency or change in one's life span such parent death, divorce, immigration, and national disasters (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979; Espelage, 2014).

SWD comprise a group of children and adolescents with highly diverse profiles and ecologies (Rose, 2011), the socio-ecological framework provides an explanatory structure for understanding how bullying evolves and how it is maintained within the different ecologies that place SWD at significantly higher risk for bullying victimization and perpetration. In other words, the socio-ecological framework illuminates the complexity of various risk factors that increase the likelihood of SWD being affected by bullying and protective factors that are key to bullying prevention and intervention. As a theoretical perspective, the socio-ecological framework provides a multi-system approach to understanding bullying prevention and intervention (Espelage, 2014; Swearer & Espelage, 2011), and thus it was utilized as a roadmap for this study.

## **II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Bullying is a highly contextual, multi-faceted problem, and prevention and intervention, particularly as they relate to SWD, need to be examined through the lens of the socio-ecological perspective (Swearer & Espelage, 2011). In this chapter, I will first present the various individual, peer, teacher, and school factors relevant to bullying prevention and intervention for SWD. Then, I will underscore the importance of understanding the federal and state laws as well as anti-bullying policies that state that school personnel have a legal obligation to follow to address bullying, particularly among SWD. Additionally, in an effort to illuminate the main bullying prevention and intervention elements that are currently utilized in schools with general education youth and SWD, I will present results from studies evaluating the effectiveness of various anti-bullying programs and practices. I will conclude this chapter with a description of the proposed multi-tiered approach to bullying prevention and intervention that American researchers have been promoting to ensure more intensive supports for SWD.

### **SWD and the Bullying Phenomenon**

The bullying phenomenon has been widely researched since the 1970s, and several literature reviews, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses have attempted to synthesize the empirical evidence about this enduring problem affecting youth around the world. To this date, only six research syntheses have isolated the experiences of youth with disabilities. A summary of the existing systematic reviews and literature reviews is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Literature Reviews and Systematic Reviews Focusing on Youth with Disabilities*

Authors (Year)	Type of review & purpose	METHOD Years searched, detailed search procedure	METHOD Databases searched	METHOD Hand searching, international studies, & grey literature	N Studies	Main Findings
Carter & Spencer (2006)	Literature review  To review current research in order to examine the risk factors and the degree and nature of bullying experienced by SWD.	1989-2003, included studies used both quantitative and qualitative research designs.	ERIC and PsycInfo	Reference lists of all obtained articles were examined as well as existing reviews and recent issues of all major special education journals.	11	Students with both physical and more overt disabilities and less apparent disabilities had a higher level of victimization than their general education peers.
Houchins, Oakes, & Johnson (2016)	Systematic review  To examine the experimental bullying intervention studies for SWD	1980-2015, only peer-reviewed studies focusing on evaluating bullying prevention or intervention programs that aimed directly to reduce victimization and/or perpetration, results had to be reported specifically for SWD, studies were conducted in K-12 school settings	PsychInfo, online-first journal publications were also reviewed	Ancestral searches were conducted.	6	<i>Second Step</i> yielded a significant decrease in self- reported perpetration. AfA had positive treatment effects on bullying of SWD. BP-PBS yielded a significant decrease in verbal and physical bullying of SWD. <i>Peer EXPRESS</i> yielded significant treatment effects for self- reported victimization, but it remained higher than the level of self-reported victimization reported by peers without disabilities. Peer- and teacher-ratings of SWD participating in <i>STORIES</i> did not indicate any significant decrease in

Authors (Year)	Type of review & purpose	METHOD Years searched, detailed search procedure	METHOD Databases searched	METHOD Hand searching, international studies, & grey literature	<i>N</i> Studies	Main Findings
						bullying behaviors.
Maïano, Aimé, Salvas, Morin, & Normand (2016)	Systematic review  To examine the prevalence of bullying perpetration and victimization among youth with ID.	Prior to 2015, studies were retained if they examined prevalence rates of bullying perpetration, victimization or both among youth with ID, published in English in peer- reviewed journals, only prospective, cohort, cross- sectional and case- control studies were included.	Academic Search Complete, Medline, PsycARTICLES (including PsycINFO, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Scopus, CINAHL, Education Sources, ERIC, and SocINDEX	Hand search was performed in reference lists of relevant articles and previous reviews of the literature on youth with disabilities and in all available years of peer- reviewed journals devoted to ID or developmental disorders.	11	Prevalence rates of bullying perpetration among youth with ID were comparable to peers without disabilities; however, rates of victimization and perpetration-victimization (bully-victim status) were higher for youth with ID. Prevalence rates varied considerably based on the study characteristics.
Rose, Monda- Amaya, & Espelage (2011)	Literature review  To provide special educators with a better understanding of the bullying phenomenon and to synthesize the literature on perpetration and victimization of SWD.	Specific years searched were not reported, studies published in peer-reviewed journals or cited in at least five other peer-reviewed articles, contained bullying, harassment, perpetration, or victimization as the primary or secondary focus of	EBSCO database	Ancestral searches were conducted.	32	Students with high- incidence disabilities (e.g., LD, EBD) exhibit more bullying perpetration than students without disabilities. Students with EBD demonstrate the highest levels of perpetration in comparison to students with and without disabilities. No studies investigated anti-bullying interventions for students with disabilities.

Authors (Year)	Type of review & purpose	METHOD Years searched, detailed search procedure	METHOD Databases searched	METHOD Hand searching, international studies, & grey literature	N Studies	Main Findings
		the study, included SWD in the sample, and reported data on SWD.				
Schroeder, Cappadocia, Bebko, Pepler, & Weiss (2014)	Literature review  To review emerging literature on bullying experiences within ASD populations.	NR	NR	NR	17	Youth with ASD experience higher rates of victimization than general education population and in some cases higher than other disability groups.
Sreckovic, Brunsting, & Able (2014)	Systematic review  To provide a synthesis of literature on the prevalence of victimization of students with ASD and factors related to victimization.	2002-2014 Studies had to focus on victimization (not only perpetration) and they had to report the prevalence rates of victimization of school-age youth with ASD.	Academic Search Complete, Education Full Text, ERIC, and PsycINFO	Ancestral reviews of reference lists of potential articles and reviews on ASD and bullying were conducted; any journal in which two or more of the identified articles were published was searched by hand from 2002 (this is when the earliest identified article was published) to 2014	21	Youth with ASD are victimized at higher rates than children without disabilities, children with other disabilities, and general population in the national sample.

*Note:* SWD = students with disabilities; ID = intellectual disability; ASD = autism spectrum disorders; BP-PBS = *Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support*

Carter and Spencer (2006) reviewed qualitative and quantitative studies from 1989 to 2003 focusing on bullying rates among school-age youth with special needs. Across the 11 reviewed studies, only three of them had been published in the United States, while most of them had been conducted in England. Results from these studies indicated that youth with both overt disabilities, including cerebral palsy (CP), muscular dystrophy, marked coordination disorders, poliomyelitis, spina bifida, Erb's palsy, hemiplegia, Friedrich's ataxia, stuttering, and disabilities considered less apparent or readily observable, such as LD, ADHD, and behavioral and academic difficulties, experienced a higher level of victimization than their peers without disabilities. Fewer studies examined perpetration and these yielded inconclusive findings as to whether youth with disabilities demonstrated more bullying behaviors than their peers without disabilities. Furthermore, the reviewed studies revealed that youth with disabilities may experience bullying through multiple means such as name-calling, teasing, physical attacks, severe verbal bullying, verbal aggression, threats, taking belongings, imitating, and making fun of them. It is noteworthy that no studies specifically examined bullying experiences among youth with ASD, ID, or EBD.

Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al.'s (2011) extensive and widely cited literature review included 32 studies. The oldest study included in their literature review was published in 1989 and the most recent one in 2007. Only seven studies included youth with disabilities from the United States, while the majority of investigations were international. Importantly, this literature review covered a wide spectrum of disabilities including LD, ASD, ID, EBD, SLI, visual impairments (VI), hearing impairments (HI), various physical disabilities, and other chronic health conditions. Rose and colleagues reported that students with high-incidence disabilities (e.g., LD and EBD) tended to exhibit more bullying perpetration than students without

disabilities. Particularly, students with EBD demonstrated the highest levels of perpetration when comparing them to students with and without disabilities (De Monchy, Pijl, & Zandberg, 2004; Van Cleave & Davis, 2006). Some evidence was found that SWD who had been victimized were likely to develop bullying behaviors to combat victimization, and they subsequently became bully-victims. Rose and colleagues found no studies that investigated anti-bullying interventions for SWD.

More recently, Schroeder, Cappadocia, Bebko, Pepler, and Weiss (2014) reviewed literature on victimization of youth with ASD. Across the 17 studies identified, the oldest one was published in 2002 and the most recent one in 2013. Nine of the reviewed investigations had samples from the United States. Schroeder and colleagues' synthesis of research indicated that youth with ASD experienced higher rates of victimization than youth from the general population and youth from any other disability group (Rowley et al., 2012; Symes & Humphrey, 2010a; Twyman et al., 2010). It was noted that social naiveté (social vulnerability) and a weakness in social skills played a significant role in the increased risk for victimization among youth with ASD (Sofronoff et al., 2011).

Sreckovic and colleagues (2014) provided another synthesis of literature focusing on victimization of youth with ASD. Their systematic review included 21 studies published from 2002 to 2014, and nine investigations had samples from the United States. The overall findings paralleled Schroeder and colleagues' results. Youth with ASD tended to be victimized at higher rates than students without disabilities, students with other disabilities, and youth from the general population in the national sample.

Maïano, Aimé, Salvas, Morin, and Normand (2016) also conducted a systematic review of research focusing on bullying prevalence among youth with ID. It was found that prevalence

of bullying perpetration among children and adolescents with ID was comparable to their peers without disabilities; however, rates of victimization and perpetration-victimization (bully-victim status) were higher for students with ID. Of significance is the fact that prevalence rates varied considerably based on the study characteristics. Mañano and colleagues pointed out some methodological challenges related to studying the prevalence of bullying among children and adolescents with ID. Questionnaires may be difficult for them to comprehend, as they generally have difficulty discerning between bullying and non-bullying situations.

Importantly, only one of the existing research syntheses focused on evaluating bullying interventions specifically for SWD (Houchins et al., 2016). Houchins and colleagues conducted a systematic review of six studies that focused on the decrease in bullying perpetration and victimization of SWD as the direct outcome. One of the reviewed studies (see Humphrey, Lendrum, Barlow, Wigelsworth, & Squires, 2013) was conducted in the United Kingdom, while the remaining investigations were from the United States. Each of the studies evaluated a different prevention or intervention program, including *Second Step*, AfA, *STORIES*, BP-PBS, Peer *EXPRESS*, *Take a Stand*, *Lend a Hand*, and *Stop Bullying*, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Four of the six studies included teachers as intervention agents, one of them used school psychologists (Rahill & Teglassi, 2003), and one investigation utilized school nurses (Vessey & O'Neill, 2011). The settings in which these prevention and intervention programs were implemented varied from public K-8 schools through self-contained and general education settings, and special centers for youth with EBD.

Houchins and colleagues (2016) utilized the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) quality indicators for evidence-based practices (CEC, 2014) to discern each study's methodological rigor. Only one of the studies (Ross & Horner, 2009) met all eight CEC quality

indicators, while two studies (see Espelage, Rose, & Polanin, 2015; Humphrey et al., 2013) met 87.5% of the quality indicators, respectively. Among the remaining studies, Vessey and O'Neill's (2011) study met 75% of the quality indicators, Saylor and Leach's (2009) study met 62.5% of the quality indicators, and Rahill and Teglas's (2003) investigation met 50% of the quality indicators. Notably, only two studies reported fidelity of implementation (see Humphrey et al., 2013; Ross & Horner, 2009). In summarizing their findings, Houchins and colleagues emphasized the need for replication studies in order to establish evidence-based practices in bullying prevention and intervention for SWD. Overall, the existing number of publications offering a synthesis in the bullying special education literature, although small, indicates that there is a growing interest in understanding the bullying phenomenon and prevention and intervention, as it relates to youth with specific disabilities who are served in diverse settings.

**Bullying across Different Disabilities and Educational Settings.** The primary focus here is on youth with high-incidence disabilities, including LD, EBD, and mild ID which, historically, have been most prevalent in schools. Additionally, youth demonstrating HF-ASD, SLI, and ADHD are identified at a higher rate than previously, and as some argue, they comprise a new category within the high-incidence group (Gage, Lierheimer, & Goran, 2012).

Despite the large body of research indicating that SWD are likely to be overrepresented in the bullying dynamic (Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011), reported prevalence rates vary across different studies. This variability poses challenges for prevention and intervention planning, as it affects the practitioners' ability to identify best bullying practices (Chalamandaris & Piette, 2015). One of the key factors that may explain inconsistencies in bullying prevalence among SWD across different studies is related to the definition and measurement of bullying. Some researchers employ a clearly operationalized definition, while others provide informants

with discrete examples of behaviors that constitute bullying (Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

Furthermore, there is a wide discrepancy in the cutoff scores used to establish the bully, victim, or bully-victim status (Bear et al., 2015). It is important to recognize that studies using more liberal cutoff criteria are likely to yield higher prevalence rates (Bear et al., 2015).

Another salient methodological issue in bullying prevention and intervention research is that researchers tend to use various time frames of recall. In some studies participants have been asked whether students had experienced bullying or bullied others within the past year (e.g., Blake et al., 2012; Little, 2002). In other studies researchers have emphasized the repeated nature of bullying, a key component of Olweus' (1993, 2001) bullying definition, and students reported the frequency of bullying and victimization (e.g., 2-3 times a month, about once a week, several times a week; e.g., Carran & Kellner, 2009; Kloosterman, Kelley, Craig, Parker, & Javier, 2013). Additionally, studies that dichotomize youth based on the presence or absence of a disability (e.g., students with disabilities vs. students without disabilities) might yield lower prevalence rates than studies that examine bullying rates for specific types of disability (Rose & Espelage, 2012). Decisions like this may further obscure the prevalence of bullying behaviors and victimization among specific groups of disabilities and undermine the need for targeted interventions (Rose, Espelage, et al., 2011; Rose & Espelage, 2012).

Given various methodological inconsistencies found in bullying prevention and intervention research (Chalamandaris & Piette, 2015), it is critical to understand that the rates of bullying perpetration and victimization of SWD fall on a continuum, and different disability characteristics and educational placements may affect students' involvement within the bullying dynamic differently (Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011). Descriptions of the bullying involvement of SWD across various high-incidence disabilities and educational placements

suggest that school personnel may need to differentiate and intensify their bullying prevention and intervention efforts. Low social competence is one of the most salient characteristics that youth with high-incidence disabilities share (Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001), which places them at particularly high risk for bullying involvement.

Bullying involvement among youth with LD is a complex issue. Specifically, understanding the roles they are more likely to play in the bullying dynamic (e.g., victims, bullies, or bully-victims) warrants different prevention and intervention practices. Kokkinos and Antoniadou (2013) examined self-reported bullying and victimization among 50 students with LD and 296 youth without LD in Grades 4-6 who attended elementary schools in Greece. Results from the *Bullying and Victimization Scale* (BVS) showed that children with LD had experienced a significantly higher frequency of direct victimization (physical and verbal), indirect victimization (social exclusion), and direct perpetration (physical and verbal) than their peers without LD.

Using the students' reported frequency of bullying perpetration and victimization, Kokkinos and Antoniadou (2013) classified participants into four different groups that included aggressive bullies (high frequency of perpetration but low frequency of victimization), passive victims (low frequency of perpetration but high frequency of victimization), bully-victims (high frequency of both perpetration and victimization), and neutrals (low frequency of both perpetration and victimization). They found that students with LD were more likely to participate in the bullying dynamic as bully-victims than their peers without LD. On the contrary, there were no significant differences between students with LD and their peers without LD with regard to frequency of bullying involvement as either passive victims or aggressive

bullies. This suggests that perpetration for youth with LD may be a learned behavior in response to endured victimization (Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011).

Singer (2005) conducted a phenomenological study to examine experiences with victimization and teasing in a sample of 60 students, aged 9-12 years, diagnosed with dyslexia, who attended mainstream schools in the Netherlands. Results from semi-structured interviews revealed that 85% of participants had been teased because they had dyslexia, while 25% of the participants were teased and bullied more than once a week without any specific reason.

Similarly, semi-structured interviews with 101 students with moderate LD aged 11-14 years yielded similar findings in England (Norwich & Kelly, 2004). Eighty-three percent of students with LD experienced some form of victimization; however, verbal victimization was most prevalent (24%).

The investigations described above offer evidence that youth with LD are at greater risk for being involved in bullying as bully-victims, bullies, and victims, yet, two studies conducted in the United States have provided contradictory evidence. Rose, Espelage, Monda-Amaya, Shogren, and Aragon (2015) employed a cross-sectional survey to compare the bullying perpetration and victimization of 83 middle school students with LD to their peers without LD and found no statistically significant differences. Similarly, Swearer et al. (2012) found that students with LD ( $n=51$ ) between the ages 9 and 16 years did not report significantly less or more victimization and bullying perpetration than their peers without disabilities.

Several investigations have provided converging evidence that youth with ASD are at greater risk for victimization than their peers with and without other disabilities (Rose, Stormont, Ze, Simpson, Preast, & Green, 2015; Twyman et al., 2010; Zeedyk et al., 2014). One study suggested that such youth are four times more likely to be victimized than their peers without

disabilities (Twyman et al., 2010). It appears that deficits in Theory of Mind, social naiveté, and social exclusion intersect and mutually reinforce one another and place youth with ASD at increased risk for victimization (Schroeder et al., 2014).

Researchers in Canada employed the *Olweus Bullying Victimization Questionnaire* (BVQ) to examine different forms of victimization among adolescent boys between the ages of 11 and 18 years (Kloosterman et al., 2013). The sample included 24 boys with HF-ASD, 22 boys with LD/ADHD, and 24 boys without disabilities. Results revealed that significantly more boys with HF-ASD (45.8%) reported being purposefully left out (social exclusion) than boys with ADHD/LD (27.1%), and boys without disabilities (20.8%). Also, more boys with HF-ASD (29.2%) reported being hit, kicked, and pushed (physical bullying) than typically developing boys (16.7%). Despite these patterns, there were no significant differences between boys with HF-ASD and boys with LD/ADHD in prevalence of physical bullying. There were also no significant differences between the LD/ADHD group and youth without disabilities with respect to being left out on purpose, or being hit, kicked, or pushed. On the other hand, the level of engagement in bullying perpetration was comparable across the three groups of boys.

Twyman et al. (2010) provided another compelling comparison of bullying experiences across different disabilities using the *Reynolds Bully-Victimization Scale* (BVS) with a large sample of 207 youth with ASD, LD, EBD, ADHD, and cystic fibrosis between the ages of 8 and 17 years. Youth with ASD and ADHD were found to be at highest risk for victimization. Nearly one-third of youth with ASD (29.0%) and ADHD (29.2%) had been bullied and they were more than four times more likely to be victimized than their peers without disabilities. On the other hand, the highest percentage of youth with LD (30.3%) reported having engaged in bullying

behaviors and they were more than five times more likely to bully others than their peers without disabilities.

Furthermore, using the *University of Illinois Victimization Scale* and the *University of Illinois Bully Scale*, Rose, Stormont, Ze, Simpson, Preast, and Green (2015) surveyed victimization and bullying across different disabilities and educational settings in a sample of 1,055 students with disabilities in Grades 6-10. Contrary to the findings presented above, they found that students with ASD reported higher levels of direct victimization (verbal and physical) than youth with LD, OHI, and sensory-related disabilities. Importantly, youth with ASD did not report a significantly different level of bullying perpetration in comparison to students without disabilities.

Additionally, evidence from the reviewed studies examining bullying experiences of youth with EBD reveal that such students are at higher risk for perpetration than other disability groups and peers without disabilities (Rose & Espelage, 2012; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011). Rose and Espelage's (2012) cross-sectional survey investigated bullying and victimization among 163 students with different types of disabilities in Grades 7-8 in comparison to their peers without disabilities in the United States. They found that when the participants were dichotomized into students with and without disabilities, the groups did not report any significant differences in their levels of victimization, bullying, or fighting. Yet, when the data were examined isolating specific disability types, 30.4% of students with EBD reported involvement in the bullying dynamic as bullies, a proportion that was significantly higher than the bullying perpetration reported by students with OHI or LD, and students without any disabilities. Additionally, students with EBD engaged in a significantly higher level of fighting than their peers with LD, SLI, low incidence disabilities, and no disabilities.

More recently, Rose, Simpson, et al. (2015) conducted a descriptive study to examine the self-reported prevalence of bullying across different disability types in a large sample of 1,183 students from 17 middle schools, six high schools, and two alternative schools in five school districts in the southwestern area of the United States, and they found that students with EBD endorsed the highest level of bullying behaviors (78.8%), bully-victim involvement (59.3%), and relational victimization (66.3%) in comparison to students with LD, ASD, EBD, OHI, and sensory-related disabilities. These results have provided further evidence that adolescents with EBD could be perpetrators, victims of social exclusion, and bully-victims. For students with EBD, victimization was not a significant predictor of bullying behaviors. Higher levels of victimization predicted increased levels of bullying among students with disabilities other than EBD. A higher level of anger was a stronger predictor of higher levels bullying behaviors for students with EBD, as compared to students with other disabilities. These findings suggest that bullying perpetration for youth with EBD could be a manifestation of their disability (Rose & Espelage, 2012; Rose, Simpson, et al., 2015).

An increased level of victimization has also been found among youth with SLI, with some evidence suggesting that it could be three times higher than among their peers without disabilities (Conti-Ramsden & Botting, 2004; Knox & Conti-Ramsden, 2003). Knox and Conti-Ramsden (2003) examined victimization among 100 students with SLI aged 11 years in England. Thirty-six percent of these children had been victimized more than once within the past week (14.9% educated in mainstream schools and 21.3% attending more restrictive special education settings). Notably, 22.3% of students with SLI perceived themselves to be at more severe risk for bullying (they selected “more than once” on two bullying items on the *My Life in School Checklist*) as compared to only 6% of students with no history of special education needs.

Furthermore, Conti-Ramsden and Botting (2004) examined the prevalence of victimization among 200 students with SLI, and they also found that 36% of students aged 10 were at risk for being targets of victimization (i.e., they identified one or more items on the victimization items of the *My Life in School Checklist*), as compared to 12% of their typically developing peers.

Additionally, Knox and Conti-Ramsden (2007) examined a cohort of 139 students with SLI ranging in age from 15 to 16 years. Of note, 17.3% of students with SLI experienced bullying and teasing of any degree at the present time as compared to only 7.3% of typically developing students. However, the level of victimization was significantly higher when students were asked about their experiences of being bullied retrospectively. Forty-four percent of students with SLI reported being subjects of bullying or teasing of any degree when they were younger compared to 22.6% of students without SLI.

Several studies have tried to capture the intricate intersection of the severity of a child's disability, restrictiveness of educational setting, and bullying prevalence, which may require different types and intensity of bullying prevention and intervention. Rose, Stormont, et al.'s (2015) investigation of bullying experiences among a large sample of adolescents ( $N=1,055$ ) with different disabilities in Grades 6-10 and educated in inclusive and self-contained settings illuminates the complexity of this issue in schools in the United States. Within inclusive classrooms, students with ASD reported higher levels of direct victimization (physical and verbal) and relational victimization than youth without disabilities. Conversely, students with ASD in self-contained classrooms reported more engagement in fighting than students with ASD in more inclusive classrooms. Similarly, students with LD who attended inclusive classroom settings experienced higher rates of direct victimization, relational victimization, cybervictimization, and fighting than their peers without disabilities. Youth with LD educated in

self-contained classrooms and their peers without disabilities reported similar levels of victimization. Additionally, students with EBD educated in self-contained settings were subjects of a significantly higher level of victimization and relational victimization than their peers without disabilities in general education settings. Students with EBD in self-contained settings also engaged in more fighting than students with EBD in inclusive classrooms and students without disabilities. Interesting results were yielded for students with ID. In comparison to students without disabilities, adolescents with ID educated in either inclusive or self-contained classrooms experienced higher rates of victimization, relational victimization, and cybervictimization. Additionally, students with ID in self-contained settings engaged in significantly higher levels of direct bullying and relational bullying than youth without disabilities. Thus, students with ID in restrictive settings exhibited significantly more bullying behaviors than students with ID in inclusive classrooms. However, in inclusive classrooms students with ID experienced more relational victimization than students with ID in restrictive settings and students without disabilities. The severity of ID was not reported in this study.

Some investigations have found that regardless of the restrictiveness of educational placement, SWD were perceived to be at greater risk for victimization when compared to their peers without disabilities. For instance, Knox and Conti-Ramsden (2003) found high levels of victimization among students with SLI in England even though there were no significant differences between children with SLI attending mainstream schools (with or without some special education support) and children with SLI educated in more restrictive placements such as language units, or language or special schools.

**Bullying Victimization and Perpetration of SWD in Middle School.** Researchers who study the developmental trajectory of bullying concur that middle school is likely to be the

developmental peak of bullying victimization and perpetration (Blake et al., 2012; Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Pellegrini & Long, 2002). One cross-sectional survey found that only 19.5% of students ( $n=558$ ) attending a large middle school in the United States reported they had not bullied others in the last 30 days (Espelage et al., 2000). Thus, it is conceivable that some form of bullying involvement, whether as a bully, victim, or bystander, is part of every adolescent's experience.

As noted earlier, the different roles adolescents play within the bullying dynamic tend to be fluid and may shift depending on the context of their peer ecologies (Espelage & Swearer, 2010; Rose, Espelage, et al., 2011; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011; Swearer & Espelage, 2004). Peers play a central role in early adolescence and there are three main theories that shed some light on the social development of students and the increase in bullying during middle school years (Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009). The theory of homophily proposes that adolescents' peer networks include similarly minded students (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Swearer et al., 2009). Some empirical evidence suggests that bullies may socialize with other bullies, while victims may gravitate toward peers who experience a similar level of peer rejection (Espelage et al., 2003). Thus, the homophily theory helps educators understand that bullying and victimization, specifically in middle school, is typically not a one-person act.

Another theory related to the social development of adolescents is the dominance theory (Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Swearer et al., 2009). As students transition from elementary to middle school, they enter a new environment that is bigger and less personal than primary schools, and they need to establish social dominance and status with new peers (Pellegrini & Van Ryzin, 2011). As Swearer and colleagues (2009) pointed out, this dominance can be established

through either affiliated (e.g., leadership) or antagonistic (e.g., bullying) means. Students engaging in bullying to gain social dominance use it as proactive aggression, and they target peers who are more vulnerable. Once dominant relationships are formed, bullying typically decreases among youth (Pellegrini & Van Ryzin, 2011; Swearer et al., 2009). Pellegrini and Long (2002) conducted a 3-year longitudinal study of bullying prevalence during transition from elementary to middle school using self-reports, peer nominations, teacher checklists, and direct observations. They found that bullying increased as students made a transition from fifth to sixth grade and decreased from sixth to seventh grade. However, it is important to note that the operational definition of bullying included only physical and verbal bullying. Excluding indirect bullying, which increases in early adolescence, was a limitation of this study.

Finally, the attraction theory proposes that adolescents are more attracted to peers who exhibit characteristics related to autonomy from adults (e.g., disobedience and aggression) than individuals displaying behaviors associated with childhood (e.g., obedience and compliance; Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Swearer et al., 2009). Middle school students tend to be more accepting of bullies than elementary students, and “popular” bullies can gain reinforcement from their social peer network (Rose, Espelage, et al., 2011). These three theories illuminate the role peers play in bullying involvement and in prevention and intervention in middle school.

The theories described above highlight the importance of peer acceptance in middle school. For SWD, navigating the peer milieu in middle school can be particularly challenging. As youth progress through their developmental trajectory, they become more adept socially and cognitively to recognize the differences between students with and without disabilities (Rose, 2011). In primary grades, students’ disabilities may not have been identified and their disability

characteristics and severity might have been less noticeable, yet the discrepancies between SWD and their peers without disabilities become more pronounced in middle school (Rose, 2011).

Researchers who have examined socio-ecological factors related to the overrepresentation of SWD in bullying concur that poor social skills are a particularly significant predictor of bullying involvement for SWD (Blake et al. 2016; McLaughlin, Byers, & Vaughn, 2010; Nabuzoka, 2003; Rose et al., 2004; Rose & Espelage, 2012). Per Gresham and colleagues (2001), social skills include behaviors that need to be taught, learned, and practiced in order to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships with peers and adults. There are several dimensions of social skills, including those associated with peer relations (e.g., complimenting and praising others, offering help, and inviting peers to play), self-management (e.g., following rules, managing temper, and compromising), academics (e.g., completing tasks/assignments independently, and listening to teacher directions), compliance (e.g., complying with social rules and expectations), and assertiveness (e.g., initiating interactions and conversations, acknowledging praise, and inviting others to play; Caldarella & Merrell, 1997; Gresham et al., 2001). These social skills are associated with social competence that includes judgements of these behaviors within and across different settings (Gresham et al., 2001). Given their heightened risk for deficits in social skills (Gresham et al., 2001; Mishna, 2003), SWD may have difficulty establishing and maintaining lasting peer relationships (Gresham et al., 2001), and experience more social isolation that puts them at greater risk for bullying perpetration and victimization (De Monchy et al., 2004; Humphrey & Symes, 2010a).

Several investigations have examined bullying of SWD in the context of middle school. Blake and colleagues' (2012) longitudinal study that employed a large national sample of youth with disabilities revealed that the level of victimization of SWD was highest in middle school

(34.1%), as compared to elementary school (24.5%) and high school (26.6%). Important to note, youth with EBD attending middle schools experienced higher levels of victimization (51.8%) than middle school students with all disabilities combined (34.1%). Additionally, both elementary and middle school students with autism had the highest likelihood of repeated victimization than any other disability group. Unfortunately, the odds ratio for repeated victimization of middle school adolescents with autism was higher than the odds ratio of elementary students with autism.

Moreover, results from Rose et al.'s (2009) large cross-sectional study that included students from 14 middle schools and 18 high schools in the United States revealed that SWD reported consistently higher levels of bullying behaviors across Grades 7-12, when compared to their peers without disabilities. Notably, SWD in Grade 7 who were educated in self-contained classrooms reported the highest level of bullying behaviors. Although bullying perpetration and victimization are typically expected to decrease over time (Pellegrini & Long, 2002), Rose and colleagues found that SWD reported consistently higher levels of bullying behaviors, victimization, and fighting, as compared to their peers without disabilities, even after transitioning from middle school to high school.

Similarly, Carran and Kellner (2009) found that students with EBD in Grades 6-10 who attended private therapeutic schools in the United States engaged in a high level of perpetration and victimization. Nevertheless, there were no significant differences in students' bullying involvement across grade levels. Thus, it is important to recognize that while some evidence indicates that SWD are at the highest risk for bullying involvement in middle school, the overrepresentation of SWD in the bullying dynamic is likely to persist across the middle and

high school years. In contrast, the prevalence of bullying typically decreases among youth in general education after they transition to high school.

### **The Role of School Personnel in Bullying Prevention and Intervention**

Because bullying is a systemic problem, all school personnel play a substantial role in the socio-ecological model of bullying prevention and intervention (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012).

Throughout their educational careers, SWD navigate through school with support from multi-disciplinary Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teams that comprise general education teachers, special education teachers as well as related services personnel such as social workers, speech and language pathologists (SLPs), and school psychologists. Additionally, school administrators, including principals and assistant principals, provide teachers with administrative support and leadership that affect the learning environment for all students (McLeskey, Billingsley, & Waldron, 2016). Bullying researchers have documented that the knowledge and views of school personnel on bullying create a school culture and climate that may or may not tolerate bullying and promote student safety. Therefore, understanding the perceptions of school personnel is paramount to advancing bullying prevention and intervention (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2013; Espelage, 2015; Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012; Ofe, Plumb, Plexico, & Haak, 2016).

Bradshaw et al.'s (2007) frequently cited investigation involved 5,185 students in Grades 4-12 and 1,547 school personnel, including teachers, guidance counselors, and school psychologists. Findings underscore significant discrepancies in their perspectives about bullying. Seventy-one percent of the school personnel estimated that only 15% or fewer of the students they served had been bullied two or more times within the past month. In contrast, 41% of the students reported some form of frequent bullying involvement. Specifically, 23% of them

self-reported victimization, 8% revealed frequent bullying perpetration, and 9% were involved as bully-victims. Thirty-two percent of the middle school students reported frequent victimization, while 40% of the middle school staff estimated that fewer than 10% of the middle school students had experienced victimization in the past month. Most importantly, 76% of the middle school students indicated that they had witnessed bullying within the past month. Although the staff's self-efficacy for handling bullying was high, 67% of the middle school students viewed the school's bullying prevention and intervention as inadequate, and 62% of them indicated that school staff efforts to intervene usually made the situation worse.

**General Education Teachers.** Research shows that teachers' awareness, views, and responses to bullying are key factors to consider when designing effective bullying prevention and intervention (Bauman & Del Rio, 2005; Holt & Keys, 2004; Hymel, McClure, Miller, Shumka, & Trach, 2015). Because teachers are expected to support the implementation of anti-bullying campaigns, their views and responses to bullying may affect students' willingness to seek help (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Yet, empirical evidence indicates that teachers have trouble distinguishing bullying from other forms of aggression and they tend to underestimate the prevalence of bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Demaray, Malecki, Secord, & Lyell, 2013). Students, particularly adolescents, have also perceived teachers to be ineffective or unsupportive (Demaray et al., 2013).

Yoon and Kerber (2003) surveyed elementary teachers to examine their attitudes about bullying. Teachers were provided with a questionnaire with six vignettes depicting different types of bullying (e.g., physical, verbal, and social exclusion), and rated the seriousness of each bullying scenario. They also reported their levels of empathy toward victims, the likelihood that they would intervene, and their choice of appropriate responses. Interestingly, teachers' rankings

related to seriousness, empathy, and the likelihood of intervening were lower for social exclusion than for physical and verbal bullying. Teachers reported similar rankings of their empathy toward the victim and the likelihood of intervening with physical and verbal bullying.

Importantly, they rated physical bullying as more serious. Additionally, they were more likely to respond to physical and verbal bullying than social exclusion. Similarly, pre-service teachers in another study labeled physical aggression as an act of bullying more frequently and perceived it as a more serious problem than verbal bullying (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000).

The work of Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2007) shows how general education teachers' perceptions of bullying may influence their daily responses to bullying. Three main categories emerged after surveying teachers' views on bullying: (a) assertive beliefs (e.g., students are expected to stand up for themselves); (b) bullying is a normative behavior (e.g., bullying is part of childhood experience); and (c) avoidant beliefs (e.g., students should separate from bullies or avoid them). Although teachers were less likely to endorse normative views than assertive or avoidant beliefs, they were more likely to perceive bullying as a more normative behavior for boys than for girls. Furthermore, teachers were more likely to expect boys to demonstrate some independent coping skills in dealing with bullying. Teachers who endorsed assertive beliefs were more likely to encourage victims to stand up for themselves. In contrast, teachers adhering to normative views of bullying were least likely to intervene with bullying.

**Special Education Teachers.** Although many studies have examined the bullying phenomenon from the perspective of general education teachers (e.g., Bauman & Del Rio, 2005; Bradshaw et al., 2007; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2007; Leff, Kupersmidt, Patterson, & Power, 1999; Yoon & Kerber, 2003), it appears that less is known about bullying prevention and intervention from the perspective of special education teachers. Given the role of special

education teachers, the paucity of research describing their knowledge and views of bullying as well as their experiences with prevention and intervention is a serious concern.

Special education teachers support the diverse needs of SWD in a wide variety of educational settings that range from highly inclusive general education classrooms to self-contained special education placements. Although findings tend to be inconclusive across studies, a growing body of research suggests that there is a relation between the restrictiveness of an educational setting and bullying involvement among SWD (Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2015; Luciano & Savage, 2007; Norwich & Kelly, 2004; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011; Rose, Stormont, et al., 2015). Special education teachers are held accountable for providing specialized instruction in the least restrictive environment (LRE), and as members of multidisciplinary teams, they take an active role in developing, implementing, and monitoring students' IEPs (Spoede, Fontenot, & Simpson, 2016; Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006). Additionally, special education teachers are expected to collaborate with general education teachers to promote the social competence of SWD, particularly when they are educated primarily in general education settings (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). Consequently, special education teachers have a unique and comprehensive understanding of students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral challenges that could be risk factors for bullying. Thus, looking through the socio-ecological lens, it is safe to say that special education teachers need to play a central role in bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.

Research focusing on special education teachers' perceptions and overall experiences with bullying among youth with disabilities is scant. A systematic search for primary studies, focused on special education teachers, published in peer-reviewed journals from 2000 to the present, yielded only one investigation. Eden, Heiman, and Olenik-Shemesh (2013) recruited 71

special education teachers from elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools in Israel and compared their perceptions and concerns about cyberbullying to the views of 257 general education teachers. The special education teachers were more often than general education teachers concerned about cyberbullying, and they were more likely to believe in the school's commitment to address cyberbullying. Special educators who were teaching students with LD and ADHD reported greater confidence in managing bullying than special education teachers who supported students with more severe disabilities. In light of the fact that special education teachers support children and adolescents who are overrepresented in the bullying dynamic, it is particularly worthwhile to examine how they respond to bullying and what prevention and intervention strategies they integrate into their practice.

**Other School Personnel.** As noted earlier, SWD receive support from a multitude of different school personnel through leadership, consultation and collaboration, and direct services. Because principals are considered to be key decision makers in schools, understanding their perceptions and involvement in bullying prevention and intervention is essential. Dake, Price, Telljohann, and Funk (2004) surveyed 378 elementary school principals (K-5 or K-6) in the United States to gain their perspectives on bullying prevention and intervention efforts. Results revealed that these school administrators generally perceived bullying to be less of a problem in their schools than what the national bullying rates indicate. The use of whole-school programs was rare in the schools surveyed. Some of the barriers to adopting a whole-school approach noted by the principals included lack of prioritizing bullying over other problems as well as lack of training and resources. Principals perceived post-bullying approaches, such as calling a parent after a bullying incident, having a serious talk with a bully or victim, and holding a meeting with those involved in bullying as more effective than increased supervision of school areas in which

bullying is more likely to occur (e.g., lunchroom and hallways) and the use of primary/universal prevention such as having a bullying prevention committee, school-wide activities focusing on increasing awareness of bullying, establishing classroom rules, or parent training meetings.

Overall, the principals perceived contacting a parent of a bully as the most effective approach, while they saw holding school-wide all-day events to increase student, parent, and community awareness of bullying as least effective. Principals who had received some bully prevention training were more likely to endorse primary prevention as an effective approach to bullying.

Kennedy et al. (2012) surveyed a smaller sample of 98 teachers and 41 school administrators from 139 different school types in the United States. There was a general agreement that bullying prevention should be part of the school curriculum at each level, from elementary school through high school. Importantly, the principals perceived the role of educators in bullying prevention as less substantial than the teachers did. Similarly, the principals identified a lesser need for bullying training and professional development than the teachers and felt more confident to discuss bullying with parents of involved students. As Kennedy et al. noted, the findings from this study provide evidence of the need for increased training to unify school personnel in their understanding of bullying and the implementation of bullying prevention and intervention.

SLPs play a very unique role in bullying prevention and intervention because the majority of them serve youth with ASD (Blood, Blood, Coniglio, Finke, & Boyle, 2013) who are particularly at higher risk for victimization (Schroeder et al., 2014; Sreckovic et al., 2014). In a large-scale survey of 552 SLPs in the United States, Blood et al. (2013) examined their knowledge, likelihood of intervening, and strategies utilized with bullying of students with ASD. The majority of the SLPs (89%) working with students with ASD reported they would likely or

very likely intervene with bullying. The most frequently utilized strategies fell into three main domains: (a) reporting bullying and consulting with other school personnel, (b) educating the victim, and (c) reassuring the victim.

In a related study, Ofe et al. (2016) examined the experiences of SLPs ( $N=70$ ) with bullying of youth with autism in American schools. Results from a survey indicated that all SLPs perceived intervening with bullying as their responsibility. The majority of them said they were adequately prepared (74%) and comfortable (83%) about intervening with bullying. Their overall knowledge of bullying was accurate and consistent with the existing literature. The majority of the SLPs reported that bullying of students with ASD, particularly verbal and relational bullying, is a problem in their schools, especially in less structured and supervised areas.

Ofe et al. (2016) found that the most commonly used approach to intervening with bullying included talking with the victim and offering some strategies for dealing with bullying (88% of the SLPs), which was followed by reporting the bullying incident to other school personnel (84% of the SLPs) and having the bully apologize (39% of SLPs). The majority of SLPs reported that training specific to bullying prevention and intervention was provided in their schools once or twice per year. Although the majority (78% of the SLPs) indicated that their schools used some anti-bullying campaigns, only 41% of the SLPs reported that formal bullying prevention programs were implemented. Among those formally implemented programs, the following were named: the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; 9%), PBIS (9%), Character Counts (5%), Second Step (5%), Safe School Ambassador (5%), Stop It! (5%), Boys Town Social Skills (5%), Whole-School Response (5%), Project Cornerstone (5%), Safe School Ambassadors (5%), and Name it, Claim it, Stop it! (5%). Importantly, only 20% of the SLPs

reported that their schools used bullying prevention and intervention programs specific to youth with disabilities.

Furthermore, school psychologists are mental health providers who support bullying prevention and intervention efforts in schools directly or indirectly (Bradshaw et al., 2007, 2013). Sherer and Nickerson (2010) surveyed 213 school psychologists who were members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) to determine the current anti-bullying practices in American schools. The researchers found that the most frequently utilized anti-bullying strategy among school psychologists was to have a staff member talk with the bully after a bullying incident, followed by providing a bully with disciplinary consequences (e.g., suspension or expulsion), increased supervision in less structured areas, having a talk with a victim, and individual counseling for the bully.

The prevailing anti-bullying strategies tended to be more reactive than proactive; however, school psychologists rated using school-wide positive behavior support plans as the most effective approach, which was followed by modifying the space and schedule for less structured activities, and immediate response to bullying incidents. Additionally, the authors asked school psychologists to identify three anti-bullying strategies that require the most improvement. The most frequently selected areas of bullying prevention and intervention recognized by school psychologists as needing improvement included: (a) staff education and training, (b) procedures for reporting bullying, and (c) school-wide positive behavior support plans.

### **Anti-Bullying Laws and Policies in the United States**

Understanding the existing anti-bullying laws and policies that American schools have a legal obligation to follow is central to bullying prevention and intervention for SWD. From the

beginning, school bullying has attracted a great deal of media and political attention both in the United States and internationally. In Norway, the first-ever whole-school anti-bullying program, the OBPP, was developed by Dan Olweus and then implemented on a national scale by the Ministry of Education in the aftermath of highly publicized suicides committed in 1983 by three adolescent boys who were victims of bullying ([www.violencepreventionworks.org](http://www.violencepreventionworks.org)). In the United States, the tragic shootings at Columbine High School in 1999 sparked a national debate about bullying, and several other student suicides related to bullying captured public attention in the early 2000s and became a springboard for passing state anti-bullying laws and policies (Kueny & Zirkel, 2012; Stuart-Cassel et al., 2011). The following section offers a comprehensive review of federal and state laws that play a significant role in bullying prevention and intervention in American schools.

**Federal Laws.** Although there are no specific anti-bullying federal laws, some key antidiscrimination civil rights and educational laws provide protection to students who may be involved in bullying and charge schools with a legal obligation to address bullying issues. The civil rights laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 ensure that certain classes of individuals who have been historically stigmatized, disempowered, and discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability receive protection from discriminatory harassment (Cascardi et al., 2014; Cornell & Limber, 2015; Yell, Katsiyannis, Rose, & Houchins, 2016). Additionally, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provides equal educational opportunities to SWD, and the IDEA mandates a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the

LRE to all eligible SWD (Yell et al., 2016). Table 2 presents a description of these federal laws and their relevance to bullying prevention and intervention.

Table 2

*Federal Laws Related to Bullying*

Federal Law	Main Objective	Relevance to School Bullying	The Federal Office Overseeing the Law
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI)	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.	Some bullying may overlap with harassment on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Schools must take a systemic approach that goes beyond the school anti-bullying policy to eliminate a hostile environment for a student or group of students in the protected class.	Enforced by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX)	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. This includes sexual harassment and gender-based harassment regardless of the actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity of the harasser or target.	Some bullying on the basis of sex may overlap with sex harassment if it is severe, persistent, and pervasive and limits the students' opportunity to benefit from school services, activities, and opportunities. Schools must take a systemic approach that goes beyond the school's anti-bullying policy in order to eliminate a hostile environment for an individual student or group of students in the protected class.	Enforced by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)	All public schools and school districts as well as all public charter schools and magnet schools that are recipients of federal financial assistance must provide SWD with equal educational opportunities. This means that schools must ensure that students with disabilities receive FAPE and any discrimination on the basis of disability is prohibited.	If a student is being bullied based on a disability and it is severe, persistent, and pervasive enough that it interferes with his or her ability to participate or benefit from school services, activities, and opportunities, it constitutes a disability-based harassment.	Enforced by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights
Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II)	All public and school districts, as well as all public charter schools and magnet schools, regardless of whether they receive federal financial assistance must provide SWD with equal educational opportunities and discrimination on the	If a student is being bullied based on a disability and it is severe, persistent, and pervasive enough that it interferes with his or her ability to participate or benefit from school services, activities, and opportunities, it constitutes a disability-based harassment. Schools are required to take a systemic	Enforced by OCR and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).

Federal Law	Main Objective	Relevance to School Bullying	The Federal Office Overseeing the Law
	basis of disability is prohibited.	approach that goes beyond the school anti-bullying policy in order to eliminating a hostile environment for the individual student or a group of students with disabilities.	
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Schools have an obligation to provide all eligible SWD with FAPE in the LRE.	Prohibits bullying on <i>any</i> basis that limits or interferes with a student's receiving a meaningful educational benefit, thus resulting in a denial of FAPE in the LRE.	Enforced by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)

*Note:* FAPE = free appropriate public education; LRE = least restrictive environment; SWD = students with disabilities

Since none of the aforementioned federal laws directly address bullying, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) have issued four guidance documents titled "Dear Colleague Letters" which have repeatedly reminded school officials of their legal and educational obligations to respond to bullying and have provided guidance for addressing it (Cornell & Limber, 2015, Yell et al., 2016). Importantly, the last two "Dear Colleague Letters" issued in 2013 (U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2013) and 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014) have communicated that SWD are likely to be overrepresented in the bullying dynamic and *any* type of bullying of SWD, whether or not it is related to their disability, if it limits or interferes with their ability to receive meaningful educational benefit, it constitutes a denial of FAPE under the IDEA and needs to be promptly remedied by the school.

Importantly, OSERS attached an enclosure to the 2013 "Dear Colleague Letter" with evidence-based practices for bullying prevention and intervention (U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2013) and recommended implementation of multi-tiered behavioral frameworks such as PBIS. Additionally, school districts were explicitly advised how to respond when SWD are the subjects of bullying. According to the 2013 guidance document, schools need to consider convening an IEP meeting to determine the extent to which the needs of a student with a disability may have changed as a result of the impact of bullying and whether the IEP continues to meet his or her needs and provides a meaningful educational benefit. OSERS suggested that some additional special education supports or related services may need to be included in the student's IEP if his or her needs have changed as the result of bullying.

OCR's rulings in response to filed complaints further inform school officials about the importance of addressing bullying prevention and intervention appropriately (Cornell & Limber, 2015; Yell et al., 2016). When OCR investigates bullying or harassment complaints, federal officials rely on the guidelines provided in "Dear Colleague Letters" (Yell et al., 2016). Yell and colleagues' review of OCR rulings against school districts found the following reasons: failing to investigate and respond to a case of bullying, failing to inform the bullied student's parents, not addressing the impact of bullying on the student, failing to implement the supports that were added to the student's IEP as a result of bullying to ensure continued educational benefit, and failing to investigate the incidents that the school district should have known about.

**Anti-Bullying Laws in Illinois.** As mentioned earlier, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have passed anti-bullying laws in the last 15 years (Yell et al., 2016). Edmondson and Zeman (2011) reported that more than half (63%) of the state anti-bullying laws require schools to implement some type of universal anti-bullying prevention (e.g., staff development), 26% of state statutes require secondary prevention, and 50% of them require tertiary intervention. Schools in Illinois have been expected to maintain anti-bullying policies since February of 2008, and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is responsible for monitoring the implementation of these policies. Initially, the law lacked specificity, and it was the Illinois Prevent School Violence Act (PSVA), passed in June of 2010 (Public Act 98-0952), that explicitly defined and prohibited bullying from all public and nonpublic, nonsectarian elementary and secondary schools (ISBE, 2011). The PSVA enumerated the protected classes of individuals and the Illinois statute prohibits bullying on the basis of traits that exceed those protected by federal civil rights laws:

On the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry,

age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, general-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actually or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic. (ISBE, 2011)

Subsequently, in January of 2015, the ISBE, Division of Public School Recognition, summarized the school districts' legal obligations with regards to adapting anti-bullying policies. Thus, at the present time, all public elementary and secondary school districts, charter schools, and non-sectarian nonpublic schools are required to include the following components in their policies: (a) a definition of bullying and cyberbullying; (b) a listing of different forms of bullying; (c) a statement that bullying violates the state law and school policy; (d) explicit instructions on how to promptly report bullying; (e) procedures for promptly reporting bullying to parents of all students involved with additional information about available social-emotional supports (e.g., social work services and psychological services); (f) explicit protocol for investigating and addressing reports of bullying; (g) interventions that could be utilized to respond to bullying, including social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services; (h) a statement that any reprisal or retaliation against any individuals who report bullying is prohibited; (i) a description of consequences for individuals who falsely accuse another student of bullying in order to retaliate or bully; (j) a process to evaluate the district anti-bullying policy to determine its effectiveness; (k) some alignment with other school board policies; and (l) procedures for determining whether a bullying incident falls within the scope of the school's jurisdiction and indication that additional services are available in the district or community to help with the impact of bullying.

**Key Elements of Bullying Prevention and Intervention**

Since bullying is recognized as a public health issue and bullying prevention is legally mandated in Illinois, it is imperative that schools implement programs that have the highest prospective to reduce bullying perpetration and victimization. Extant literature abounds in systematic reviews and meta-analyses evaluating the effectiveness of various anti-bullying school-wide programs and interventions (e.g., Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Barbero et al., 2012; Evans et al., 2014; Ferguson et al., 2007; Houchins et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2015; Merrell et al., 2008; Polanin et al., 2012; Ryan & Smith, 2009; Smith et al., 2004; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). Table 3 presents a summary of the main findings from the existing reviews and meta-analyses.

Table 3

*Results from Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*

Authors (Year)	Type of review	N Studies	METHOD Years searched, detailed search procedure	METHOD Databases searched	METHOD Hand searching, international studies, & grey literature	Results
Baldry & Farrington (2007) <i>United Kingdom</i>	Systematic review	16	Up to 2006, only major evaluations conducted on the national level were included (minimum 200 students included); evaluations focusing on school violence and other general aggressive behaviors were excluded.	PsychINFO	Leading bullying researchers were contacted to obtain recently published or in-press papers; recent systematic reviews of literature were reviewed	Eight of the 16 evaluations resulted in desirable results (a reduction of 10% or more). Two of the 16 evaluations produced mixed results, four produced small (a change of less than 10%), and two produced undesirable results (an increase of 10% or more).
Barbero, Hernandez, Esteban, & Garcia (2012) <i>Spain</i>	Systematic review	32	After January 1, 2000, empirical studies were included if they evaluated the effectiveness of violence prevention and/or anti-bullying intervention program in the school environment; review studies (systematic reviews, meta-analyses) were also included if they examined the effect of school violence prevention or reduction programs, the evaluated interventions had to directly target primary and secondary students (not teachers or parents).	Medline, Trip Database, Cochrane, Academy Search Premier, PsycINFO, ERIC, and PsycARTICLES	N/R	Some programs were found be effective. Those that produced the highest results included development of social and interpersonal skills and changing bullying-related attitudes and beliefs. With respect to the age of students, better results were found among older students attending secondary schools.

Evans, Fraser, & Cotter (2014) <i>United States</i>	Systematic review	32	From June 2009 to April 2013, these authors extended the work of Farrington and Ttofi (2011); they reviewed programs designed to decrease aggression or increase social-emotional skills implemented to decrease bullying and which used a bullying measure to gauge program effectiveness; studies evaluating effectiveness of programs in elementary and middle schools were included and programs implemented in high school were excluded.	The following 12 databases were searched: Campbell Collaboration, Cochran Library, Dissertation Abstracts, ERIC, Google Scholar, Index to Thesis Database, PsycInfo, PubMed, Social Sciences Citation Index, Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, and Social Work Abstracts.	Fifteen experts in the field of bullying research were contacted to access grey literature.	50% of the studies resulted in a decrease in bullying perpetration and one study had mixed results. Of the interventions focusing on bullying victimization, 67% of them showed significant impact.
Ferguson, San Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez (2007) <i>United States</i>	Meta-analysis	42	From 1995 to 2006, only clearly randomized experimental studies were included; outcome variables had to clearly measure some element of bullying behavior or aggression toward peers.	PsychINFO	The references of primary sources were examined.	The reviewed anti-bullying programs resulted in a positive and significant effect ( $r=.12$ ). The impact of reviewed anti-bullying programs ranged from less than 1% impact (for low-risk children) to 3.6% (for high-risk children).
Houchins, Oakes, & Johnson (2016) <i>United States</i>	Systematic review	6	From 1980 to 2015, only peer-reviewed studies focusing on evaluating bullying prevention or intervention programs that aimed directly to reduce victimization and/or perpetration were included; results had to be	PsychInfo, online-first journal publications were also reviewed		The authors reviewed bullying prevention and intervention programs specifically implemented with SWD ( <i>Second Step</i> , <i>Peer EXPRESS</i> , <i>STORIES</i> , <i>AfA</i> , <i>BP-PBS</i> , <i>Take a Stand</i> , <i>Lend a Hand</i> , <i>Stop Bullying Now</i> ) which

			reported specifically for SWD; they were conducted in K-12 school settings.			yielded modest results. The outcome measures varied across the studies.
Lee, Kim, & Kim (2015) <i>Republic of Korea</i>	Meta-analysis	13	From 1990 to 2010, studies were included if they were conducted in a primary or secondary school and reported victimization as a dependent variable.	MEDLINE, PsycInfo, PubMed, the Education Resource Information Center, and the Cochrane Database	N/R	The reviewed studies had a small to moderate effect on victimization with the overall effect <i>ES</i> of -0.151. The program components that were linked to increased effectiveness included: training in emotional regulation, peer counseling focusing on empowering bystanders, and establishment of school policy. Anti-bullying programs were more effective with students in secondary schools than in primary.
Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava (2008) <i>United States</i>	Meta-analysis	16	From 1980 to 2004, included studies had to evaluate the effectiveness of school-based intervention by using an experimental or quasi-experimental group design; single case, descriptive, and qualitative studies were excluded.	PsycINFO and Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), descriptions of published research studies, dissertation abstracts, and related research documents (e.g., chapters in edited books).	Reference sections of publications obtained through the database search were inspected to locate additional studies.	Only one-third (36%) of the 28 reported intervention outcomes yielded meaningful positive average effect sizes related to social, behavioral, or psychoeducational domains. The authors did not find any pattern with regard to which intervention models were more likely to produce meaningful positive outcomes.
Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott	Meta-analysis	11	From 1980 to 2010, studies had to focus on interventions aiming to	Dissertation Abstracts International, Education Resources	Bibliographies of the selected studies were searched.	The reviewed interventions were found to be effective (Hedges's $g = .20$ ). In

(2012) <i>United States</i>			change the bystander's behavior; they had to contain a measure of bystander's behavior.	Information Center (ERIC), PsycINFO, Medline, and Science Direct		comparison to the control group, bystanders in the treatment group increased their intervention in bullying situations by 20% of one standard deviation more than youth that was in the control group. Eight of the studies included a measure of empathy for the victim, and the overall effect was positive but nonsignificant (Hedges' $g = 0.5$ ).
Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou (2004) <i>Canada</i>	Research synthesis	14	Up to December 2002, studies had to focus on a systematic evaluation of whole-school anti-bullying interventions and provide quantitative outcome data on victimization and/or perpetration in schools.	PsychINFO, ERIC, and Dissertation Abstracts	All bullying researchers in North America and Europe were contacted to request any unpublished studies evaluating the effectiveness of anti-bullying whole-school approaches; book chapters, dissertations, master's theses, and dissertations were also included.	When only the best intervention effects were considered, 67% of studies had small effect sizes for victimization while the remaining 33% had negligible effects. When reduction in bullying perpetration was examined, 33% of the reported effects were small, and 67% had negligible or negative effects.
Ttofi & Farrington (2011) <i>United Kingdom</i>	Systematic review and meta-analysis	53 program evaluations	From 1983 to May 2009, studies were included if they evaluated the effects of an anti-bullying program by comparing an intervention group to a control group;	18 electronic databases were searched, reports in languages other than English were also included	All volumes of 35 journals were hand-searched; the authors sought information from key researchers on bullying and	Bullying perpetration, on average, was reduced 20%-23% ( $d = 0.17$ ) and victimization decreased by 17%-20% ( $d = 0.14$ ). Generally, programs were more effective for older

			only anti-bullying programs specifically focusing on reducing bullying were included and the outcome measure had to be a decrease in bullying.		international colleagues in the Campbell Collaboration; some book chapters, mainly from edited books on bullying prevention, were also included.	children (11 years old and up). Working with peers was associated with an increase in victimization.
Vreeman & Carroll (2007) <i>United States</i>	Systematic review	26	Up to August 2004, studies had to describe an experimental intervention with control and intervention groups and had to include a follow-up evaluation with measured outcomes.	Medline, PsychInfo, EMBASE, Educational Resources Information Center, the Physical Education Index, Sociology: A SAGE Full-Text Collection, Cochrane Clinical Trials Registry	Bibliographies were also reviewed.	Of the 10 whole-school approach programs that included multi-level approach, seven were effective in reducing bullying. Of the 10 curricular classroom interventions that focused on changing students' attitudes, changing group norms, developing prosocial skills or self-efficacy, only four resulted in a decrease in bullying. Of the four interventions focusing on group social skills development only one had clear significant impact on bullying reduction.

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*Note:* SWD = students with disabilities

Results from the existing systematic reviews and meta-analyses indicate that anti-bullying programs are likely to be composed of multiple elements. Ryan and Smith (2009) reviewed 31 anti-bullying program evaluations conducted from 1997 to 2007, and they found that nearly half of the reviewed studies referred to programs that included at least three components, which would be considered “whole-school” programs (Smith et al., 2004). Most of the programs had a classroom component (77.4% of studies), a large number of programs also used a school-wide component (61.3% of studies), and less commonly, programs included interventions for specific peers (38.7% of studies), individuals (35.5% of studies), parents (35.5% of studies), and community (9.7% of studies).

Researchers have utilized a variety of direct and indirect outcome measures to evaluate the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions. In Ryan and Smith’s (2009) review of 31 anti-bullying program evaluations, all investigations, with one exception, used a decrease or increase in bullying perpetration or victimization as a direct outcome measure; however, nearly half of the studies used two types of outcome measures. Other behavioral outcome measures have focused on changes in prosocial behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes.

Smith and colleagues (2004) were the first researchers to synthesize evidence for the efficacy of anti-bullying programs. These authors examined 14 evaluations of whole-school anti-bullying programs that provided outcome data on the reduction in bullying perpetration and/or victimization in schools. These whole-school programs included multiple components implemented typically at three to five levels (e.g., school-wide, classroom, parents, peers, and individuals). Key elements included an anti-bullying policy, increased supervision, reorganization of the playground, staff training, dissemination of information about bullying, establishing an anti-bullying committee, involving parents in anti-bullying activities, having

clear anti-bullying rules, implementing anti-bullying curricular activities at the classroom level, social skills training, peer-led interventions, and targeted interventions for bullies and victims.

Smith et al. (2004) found that most of the reviewed evaluations had small to negligent effect sizes. With respect to victimization, 67% of the program evaluations yielded small effect sizes, while the remaining evaluations produced negligible effects. When reduction in bullying perpetration was examined, 33% of the reported effects were small, while negligible or negative effect sizes were found in 67% of the program evaluations.

Among the 14 evaluations Smith and colleagues (2004) reviewed, the OBPP (Olweus, 1993) yielded the highest results. The average effect for all conditions within the study was 0.29 for bullying and 0.33 for victimization. The self-reported bullying perpetration decreased from 37.3% at pretest to 19% at posttest, while victimization decreased from 34% at pretest to 14.3% at posttest. As Smith et al. noted, the initial success of the OBPP and the sense of urgency across the nations to intervene with bullying have led to a wide dissemination of whole-school programs; however, Olweus's (1993) results have not been replicated anywhere else. The OBPP was implemented in Bergen, Norway, in the aftermath of several suicides linked to bullying that created a national urgency to intervene with bullying, and it is plausible that there was increased commitment to implement this program effectively and achieve the desired results (Smith et al., 2004). Additionally, researchers have posited that the OBPP success could be unique to Scandinavian schools that are known to have well-trained teachers, low teacher-to-student ratio, and a long-standing tradition of statewide social welfare intervention (Smith et al., 2004).

Although the remaining whole-school anti-bullying programs in Smith et al.'s (2004) review tended to mirror the components of the OBPP, their implementation varied, which made results difficult to synthesize. Importantly, Smith and colleagues advised practitioners to remain

cautious about the potential effects of whole-school programs and not to use them exclusively. The researchers noted that since bullying is a problem that is difficult to eradicate even small effects of whole-school programs should not be dismissed.

In another review, Vreeman and Carroll (2007) examined 26 program evaluations that included 10 whole-school programs, 10 curriculum interventions, four social/behavioral skills group interventions, one evaluation of mentoring, and one study of increased social work support. In addition to examining the effect of each intervention on decreasing bullying, Vreeman and Carroll considered indirect outcome measures such as perceived school safety, self-esteem, and attitudes toward bullying. Seven of the 10 whole-school-approach programs resulted in a decrease of bullying, and they included multiple components such as school-wide rules and consequences, teacher training, classroom curriculum, conflict resolution training, and individual counseling.

Among 10 whole-school approaches, there were two evaluations of the OBPP (Olweus, 1994; Roland, 2000) that produced opposing results. Each evaluation was conducted in a different area of Norway. Olweus (1994) found a significant decrease in victimization and bullying, while Roland (2000) found that the OBPP increased victimization and bullying. Importantly, Vreeman and Carroll (2007) noted that the OBPP lacks a detailed description of how it needs to be implemented, which makes replication of Olweus' (1994) results challenging. Overall, Vreeman and Carroll found that whole-school multi-component bullying prevention programs that aimed at changing the whole-school system were more likely to result in decreasing bullying and victimization.

Moreover, Vreeman and Carroll (2007) found that only four of the 10 evaluations of classroom curriculum interventions yielded a decrease in bullying, while some resulted in

bullying increase. These classroom interventions appeared to be more effective with older students, and they typically included videotapes with class discussions, lectures, and written curriculum, and they focused on changing students' attitudes and group norms, as well as developing prosocial skills and self-efficacy. The frequency and duration of these classroom interventions ranged from one session to multiple weeks (up to 15 weeks). Vreeman and Carroll noted that the relatively low effectiveness of classroom-level interventions points to the systemic nature of bullying. Since the bullying phenomenon involves bullies, victims, peers, adults, parents, school environments, and home environments, an intervention on only one level is unlikely to yield significant results (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007).

Moreover, four targeted interventions in Vreeman and Carroll's (2007) review focused on the development of social and behavioral skills for students who were considered bullies or victims. These interventions generally yielded better results for younger children; however, only one of them, S.S. GRIN social skills group training, implemented with third-grade students in North Carolina (DeRosier, 2004), had a significant effect on direct outcomes (i.e., bullying reduction) and indirect outcomes (i.e., increased peer liking, increased self-esteem or self-efficacy, and decreased social anxiety). The remaining three social skills group interventions targeted older students and did not yield significant results. Vreeman and Carroll reiterated that this indicates that single-level bullying interventions are less likely to decrease bullying. Importantly, one of the evaluations reviewed by Vreeman and Carroll was from the United Kingdom and it involved increasing a number of social workers in order to support students' needs related to bullying (Bagley & Pritchard, 1998). It resulted in a decrease of bullying among students in primary schools, yet there was an increase of bullying in secondary schools.

Ttofi and Farrington (2011) offered another comprehensive meta-analysis of bullying

prevention programs. They calculated effect sizes for 44 of the 53 reviewed evaluations of anti-bullying programs specifically focusing on reducing bullying. Results showed that overall the reviewed anti-bullying programs were effective. On average, bullying perpetration was reduced by 20-23%, while victimization decreased by 17-20%. Importantly, Ttofi and Farrington identified several program components that were associated with a decrease in bullying, which included parent training/meetings, improved playground supervision, firm disciplinary methods, classroom management, teacher training, classroom rules, a whole-school anti-bullying policy, school conferences, information for parents, cooperative group work, the total number of program components, and the duration and intensity of the program for teachers and children. They also found that programs modeled after the OBPP were likely to be more effective. Older children, specifically in Norway, responded better to anti-bullying programs. Additionally, Ttofi and Farrington discovered that bullying instruments that used “two times per month or more” as the time period of recall were more likely to yield better outcomes. Of the various program components linked to positive outcomes, Ttofi and Farrington found that the intensity of intervention for children and parent training/meetings had the highest correlation with reducing bullying behaviors.

With respect to victimization, Ttofi and Farrington (2011) also found some key program elements associated with increased effectiveness such as firm disciplinary methods, parent training/meetings, videos, cooperative group work, and the duration and intensity of the program for children and teachers. Older children, specifically in Norway and other European countries, also showed greater decrease in victimization in response to anti-bullying interventions. On the other hand, bullying prevention and intervention programs were found to be less effective with youth from the United States and Canada. With regard to the methodological characteristics of

instruments utilized to measure victimization, Ttofi and Farrington found that those using “two times per month or more” as the time period were more likely to show positive outcomes. Moreover, two components, including the duration of the intervention program and use of videos, had the highest correlation with a decrease in victimization. Notably, Ttofi and Farrington found that involving peers to work together to combat bullying (e.g., peer mediation, peer mentoring, encouraging bystander intervention) yielded a significant increase in victimization. Overall, Ttofi and Farrington contended that bullying prevention programs need to be intensive and long lasting to produce high results.

Moreover, Baldry and Farrington (2007) reviewed 16 bullying program evaluations and found that several of them were influenced by the OBPP. The review indicated that eight bullying prevention programs yielded positive results, and they shared a few key elements such as the whole-school approach to bullying, anti-bullying policy, involving all teachers, staff members, and parent community, as well as having school-wide-, classroom-, and individual-level supports. Two of the reviewed evaluations produced mixed results, as they worked for one age group but not for another, two investigations had small or negligible results, and the remaining two had negative effects.

By the time Baldry and Farrington (2007) conducted their systematic review, more research was available on the effectiveness of the OBPP. In addition to the first program evaluation carried out in Bergen, Norway (Olweus, 1993), another evaluation was conducted in the city of Rogaland (see Roland, 1989, 1993). However, results from Rogaland’s evaluation showed an increase in bullying perpetration for boys (24%) and girls (14%) and an increase in bullying victimization for boys only (44%). Baldry and Farrington reported that teachers in Rogaland’s evaluation did not implement all components of the OBPP and demonstrated less

commitment to the overall treatment integrity. When Olweus evaluated the effectiveness of the OBPP in Bergen again (see Olweus, 2005), the results yielded once again a significant reduction in bullying perpetration (42% for boys and 48% for girls) and victimization (32% for boys and 35% for girls).

Notably, two of the evaluations reviewed by Baldry and Farrington (2007) had been conducted in the United States. *Steps to Respect* was evaluated in six elementary schools with a total of 1,126 students, ages 8-12, in the Pacific Northwest (Frey, Hirschstein, Snell, van Schoiack Edstrom, MacKenzie, & Broderick, 2005). This anti-bullying program involved universal system-wide elements such as establishing school anti-bullying policy, teacher training, and a classroom curriculum focusing on helping students develop prosocial beliefs and increase their social-emotional skills. *Steps to Respect* was evaluated with student self-reports, teacher reports, and playground observations. Results from the Student Experience Survey indicated a positive change in students' attitudes toward bullying; however, there was a small and non-significant decrease in the reported bullying and victimization. On the contrary, results from observations indicated a 30% decrease in observed bullying; however, no change was noted in the level of observed victimization.

Another program, *Expect Respect*, was implemented in 12 schools in Texas and involved 929 experimental students and 834 control students aged 11-12 (Whitaker, Rosenbluth, Valle, & Sanchez, 2004). The *Expect Respect* program aimed to prevent bullying and sexual harassment, and it comprised multiple components, including policy development, staff training, classroom education, parent education, and involvement of all school staff. Importantly, the evaluation of the *Expect Respect* program revealed that the level of bullying perpetration reported by students increased by 60% in intervention schools and by 59% in control schools after 2 years of

implementation (Whitaker et al., 2004). Importantly, victimization decreased by 10% in intervention schools, as compared to control schools that had a 27% decrease in victimization. It is important to note that *Expect Respect* resulted in students' developing more proactive attitudes toward intervening with bullying. Since the different components of *Expect Respect* mirrored the key features of the OBPP and other anti-bullying programs, it was unclear why the intervention did not produce the expected results (Baldry & Farrington, 2007).

Furthermore, Ferguson and colleagues (2007) reviewed 42 anti-bullying program evaluation studies conducted between 1995 and 2005. The researchers included only randomized experimental studies and focused on the strength of their effect size rather than the statistical significance. The anti-bullying programs yielded a positive and statistically significant effect size ( $r = .12$ ). This small effect failed to reach practical significance. Notably, Ferguson and colleagues reported that anti-bullying programs were more effective for at-risk youth than for the general education population. Specifically, less than 1% impact of the reviewed anti-bullying programs was found for low-risk children, while 3.6% impact was found for high-risk children. Ferguson et al. noted that program fidelity was an important moderator variable, yet, very few studies reported information about treatment integrity.

Subsequently, Merrell et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analysis commonly referenced in the bullying literature. Across the 16 program evaluations that Merrell and colleagues reviewed, the researchers had used a variety of dependent measures to determine the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs and interventions, including bullying others, being bullied, witnessing bullying, knowledge about bullying interventions, sympathy for victims, feeling safe at school, efficacy of intervention skills, and social skills. Only one-third (36%) of the 28 reported intervention outcomes yielded meaningful positive average effect sizes related to social,

behavioral, or psychoeducational outcomes. Thus, the majority of the reviewed average effect sizes were not meaningful or practically significant whether they were positive or negative.

Merrell and colleagues (2008) did not find any intervention models that would be more likely to yield meaningful, positive outcomes. However, these authors concluded that anti-bullying interventions can be effective, particularly in increasing awareness, knowledge of bullying, and self-perceived competence and efficacy to intervene with bullying. Anti-bullying interventions seemed to be less likely to reduce bullying behaviors or victimization. Notably, Merrell and colleagues pointed out that anti-bullying interventions do not have to be limited to interventions labeled as “anti-bullying,” and general behavioral interventions that aim at improving school climate and developing social competencies could also be considered.

More recently, Evans and colleagues (2014) extended the work of Farrington and Ttofi (2011) and conducted a systematic review of 32 studies, from June 2009 through April 2013, that evaluated the effectiveness of 24 anti-bullying interventions. Results indicated that 50% of the reviewed studies yielded a decrease in bullying perpetration, and 67% of the interventions focusing on victimization showed significant effect. Importantly, the researchers found that the effective interventions did not necessarily have to comprise the specific program elements that Farrington and Ttofi (2011) found to be associated with an increase in the effectiveness of interventions (e.g., whole-school approach, parent involvement, teacher training, and anti-bullying classroom rules posted).

Interestingly, Evans and colleagues (2014) found that the majority of studies that showed a significant impact on bullying perpetration and victimization were conducted outside the United States and had more homogenous samples, which was consistent with Farrington and Ttofi's (2011) findings. Interventions that had a significant impact tended to have less diverse

samples with the Caucasian students being the majority of the participants. As Evans and colleagues noted, American schools are more heterogeneous and have more family and community risk factors that could decrease the effectiveness bullying prevention and intervention programs in the United States, as compared to Northern or Western Europe. The researchers concluded that although there is strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of some bullying prevention and intervention programs, there are still numerous ineffective programs.

Moreover, Barbero et al. (2012) systematically reviewed 32 studies that evaluated the effectiveness of violence prevention and intervention programs. This included programs with a broad focus on decreasing violence and interventions specifically designed as anti-bullying programs. Programs that yielded the highest results had a multidisciplinary approach and focused on helping students develop social and interpersonal skills and change bullying-related attitudes. Students' attitudes and beliefs related to bullying were more likely to change in response to the interventions, while a decrease in victimization and/or violent behaviors was less common. Interestingly, Barbero and colleagues found some evidence that boys responded better to interventions. However, they pointed out that bullying instruments measuring the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions tend to focus more on direct bullying which is more common among boys, and this could explain why boys were found to respond better to interventions than girls. With respect to the age of students, better results were found among older students attending secondary schools. Overall, Barbero et al. found that effective bullying interventions involved all school professionals and parents, and they needed to be maintained in order to yield long-term effects. When interventions were withdrawn, the results were typically not maintained. Additionally, interventions needed to be adapted to school social and cultural characteristics.

Among the various research syntheses focusing on bullying prevention and intervention programs, only one meta-analysis examined effectiveness of programs designed to reduce bullying victimization as the main outcome measure (Lee et al., 2015). Results from 13 studies revealed a small to moderate effect on victimization ( $ES = -0.151$ ). The *Confident Kids* program, which was implemented with adolescents in Grades 7-10 for 8 weeks, produced the highest results ( $ES = -0.683$ ; Berry & Hunt, 2009). The intervention comprised cognitive-behavioral strategies for anxious adolescents at risk for victimization. Lee and colleagues found that interventions that provided training in emotional regulation were more likely to be effective. This included one's understanding of emotions, perspective taking, and self-regulation. Other key elements that resulted in higher effect size included adopting school anti-bullying policy and peer counseling focusing on empowering bystanders. Like other researchers, Lee and colleagues found that anti-bullying programs were more effective with students in secondary schools than in primary schools.

Additionally, one of the reviewed meta-analyses evaluated the effectiveness of interventions for bystanders (Polanin et al., 2012). Results from 11 studies showed that these reviewed interventions were effective. Bystanders in the treatment group increased their intervention in bullying situations by 20% of one standard deviation more than youth in the control group. Eight of the reviewed studies included a measure of empathy for the victim, and results showed overall small and nonsignificant effect.

Further analysis of different program elements illuminated some important findings. The geographic location of the study (e.g., programs implemented in the United States versus in Europe), intervention length/duration, and parent components (e.g., parent training and distribution of anti-bullying resources) did not significantly influence the effectiveness of

interventions. Furthermore, Polanin and colleagues (2012) found that interventions were significantly less effective when teachers were the main implementers ( $ES = 0.15$ ), as compared to other implementers ( $ES = 0.43$ ) including researchers, counselors, and computer software. Additionally, bystander interventions yielded better outcomes when the samples comprised high school students only, which, Polanin and colleagues pointed out, could suggest that a higher level of developmental maturity may be required for bystander interventions to work.

Overall, Polanin and colleagues (2012) emphasized the importance of including bystander interventions in bullying prevention programs in order to provide students with opportunities to practice intervening with bullying as bystanders. Similar to Vreeman and Carroll (2007), they reiterated that bullying is a systemic and group process and it is imperative to increase youth's awareness of the different participant roles to be played in the bullying dynamic. Polanin et al. emphasized that bullying intervention efforts need to aim at changing the whole school climate to ensure that bystanders stop reinforcing bullying.

**Factors affecting bullying prevention and intervention programs.** Although various bullying prevention programs and approaches are available, the reviewed research syntheses suggest that they tend to yield mixed results. To gain a better understanding of why bullying prevention and intervention programs produce inconsistent results, several factors need to be considered. Smith and colleagues (2004) noted that it is important to keep in mind that as students increase their awareness and knowledge of bullying, they are more likely to report bullying, which can, in turn, increase the frequency and/or prevalence of bullying on the posttest, therefore confounding the potential positive results of interventions.

Notably, Ryan and Smith (2009) found that anti-bullying program evaluations do not always meet the highest standards of methodological rigor, and in some cases, it might be

unclear whether certain bullying programs are, indeed, ineffective or whether their evaluations confound the results. For instance, in their comprehensive review of 31 anti-bullying evaluations, Ryan and Smith found that only 16% of studies described all three components of program integrity promotion such as having access to a manual, training, and supervision. Furthermore, over one-third (38.7%) of anti-bullying program evaluations did not report any information related to program integrity verification such as adherence, dosage, quality of delivery, participant responsiveness, and program differentiation. Only 35.5% of the studies reported effect sizes, subsequently making it difficult to compare the effectiveness of interventions across different studies.

Similarly, Smith et al. (2004) found that only 50% of the reviewed whole-school programs provided data on the fidelity of implementation. Importantly, they found that interventions that incorporated some systematic monitoring related to treatment integrity tended to be more successful. Smith and colleagues' review of whole-school programs revealed that researchers sometimes adapted programs; however, they did not explicitly describe their implementation procedures in their reports, which makes comparisons across studies challenging and hinders the replication of the results.

Researchers also employ various data collection instruments, including self-reports, teacher reports, or peer reports, to evaluate the effectiveness of bullying prevention and intervention programs which tend to use different definitions of bullying and various time periods of recall to discern changes in bullying victimization and perpetration. These inconsistencies make it difficult to compare the effectiveness of different programs (Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Smith et al., 2004). Smith and colleagues' (2004) review of whole-school programs revealed that self-reports were utilized most frequently; however, the time periods of

assessment across different instruments varied (e.g., bullying within last 30 days or since the beginning of the year). It is safe to say that the variability in methodological practices makes the identification of effective bullying prevention programs and program elements challenging (Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Chalamandaris & Piette, 2015).

Moreover, Ferguson and colleagues (2007) have offered several plausible explanations for why anti-bullying programs tend to have limited practical significance. First, they pointed out that anti-bullying programs provide no incentive to bullies to change their behaviors. Bullying benefits bullies by increasing their social dominance while withdrawing from engaging in bullying has no advantages. Subsequently, children who are not involved in bullying may become discouraged when they see that bullies are not using the strategies being taught in anti-bullying programs and continue to bully. Thus, Ferguson and colleagues suggested that anti-bullying programs need to have some incentives for bullies to motivate them to learn and apply the different skills and strategies they are learning as part of bullying prevention and intervention.

Additionally, Ferguson et al. (2007) pointed out that bullying, similarly to other antisocial and violent behaviors, has some genetic bases; however, it tends to be described primarily as learned behavior. It is important to acknowledge the biological basis of bullying in order to understand why not all children respond to behavioral interventions (Ferguson et al., 2007). Additionally, Ferguson and colleagues posited that it is possible that anti-bullying programs have reached the floor effect, because school violence has overall decreased and a greater decrease in bullying may not be feasible.

Swearer and colleagues (2009) have also illuminated several issues related to the overall effectiveness of anti-bullying programs, specifically their inconsistent results. These bullying

experts noted that some whole-school programs aim at bullying prevention and intervention for all students without providing victims and bullies with targeted and individualized interventions focusing on prosocial behaviors. Moreover, some whole-school anti-bullying programs lack well-developed theoretical frameworks that need to guide both program development and program evaluation (Swearer et al., 2009). Some bullying prevention programs also lack components addressing the different aspects of a school's social ecology, and they subsequently fail to address the unique and changing demographics of the community related to race, ethnicity, disability, and social orientation.

Not surprisingly, some empirical evidence indicates that the success of an anti-bullying program in one school community context does not always guarantee similar results in another context (Bauer, Lozano, & Rivara, 2007). For example, the OBPP has yielded positive results with regard to reducing bullying victimization and perpetration in Scandinavian countries, but studies of the OBPP in the United States have not demonstrated significant impact (Bauer et al., 2007). Bauer and colleagues examined pretest and posttest survey results in seven middle schools that implemented the OBPP and found that there were no significant declines in the rates of bullying victimization. When the student data were stratified further by race/ethnicity, a significant decrease in relational and physical bullying was noted among Caucasian students. The researchers pointed out that paying close attention to the racial, ethnic, and cultural fabric of the school community when selecting and implementing anti-bullying programs is important.

### **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Efforts for SWD**

As noted earlier, in spite of the fact that SWD are at greater risk for bullying involvement, few empirical studies have examined bullying prevention and intervention programs that have specifically served these youth (Houchins et al., 2016; Rose et al., 2011).

However, much can be learned about bullying prevention and intervention for SWD by eliciting their perspectives on how they typically deal with bullying and the potential solutions to bullying. The following sections offer insight into the perspectives of SWD on bullying prevention and intervention, as well as the main results from the few intervention studies that have focused on SWD.

**Perspectives of SWD on Bullying Prevention and Intervention.** Results from a phenomenological study conducted with 36 students with ASD in Grades 7-11 who attended mainstream secondary schools in England revealed that asking the teacher or teacher assistant for help was one of the most common responses to bullying these students with ASD identified (Humphrey & Symes, 2010b). Some students expressed that they would report bullying to the teacher they trusted the most while others noted that they would turn to a teacher who was in close proximity. Students indicated that they would be less likely to seek a teacher's help if they believed that he or she was not going to take some action to stop bullying. Notably, the students' views on their parents' role in bullying intervention were less favorable, as they tended to believe that involving parents would not resolve bullying. On the contrary, they were willing to seek help from siblings or other family members if they believed these individuals would intervene to stop bullying. Moreover, students with ASD underscored the importance of having friends who have some social influence over a bully and are able to stand up for them. On the other hand, youth with ASD did not perceive their classmates as a source of support in bullying situations.

The importance of seeking help from adults emerged in the work of Heiman et al. (2015). The researchers found that students with ADHD in Grades 7-10 in Israel were willing to seek assistance with bullying from adults more than from their peers without ADHD. Specifically, students with ADHD were more likely to tell parents or a family member (42.3%) than their

peers without ADHD (18.6%) and seek help from a teacher (23.1%) than from students without ADHD (4.7%). They were also more likely to tell the bully to stop (50%) than were students without ADHD (20%). Yet, some students with ADHD deal with victimization by bullying others.

Contrary to the findings from the studies described above, several investigations exploring the perspectives of SWD on the role of teachers in bullying prevention and intervention yielded less favorable views. In Singer's (2005) phenomenological study which examined verbal victimization of students with dyslexia, parents emerged as one of the main sources of emotional support. Sixty-one percent of the students discussed bullying with their parents. The majority of students had reservations about reporting to their teachers that they were bullied or teased. They indicated that teachers sometimes make their disability more public, which triggers being teased or bullied. Only 28% of youth with dyslexia reached out to teachers for support after they had been teased or bullied.

Furthermore, results from semi-structured interviews with adolescent boys with ADHD in Canada revealed their reluctance to report bullying to any authority figures (Shea & Wiener, 2003). These boys feared they would experience even more harassment and/or get into trouble after reporting bullying to school personnel. They viewed reporting bullying to adults as an ineffective approach to addressing bullying. In their experience, telling a teacher or principal resulted in a short-lived change, but bullies eventually found a way to bully them again. The boys also noted that bullying often occurred out of the sight of adults (e.g., at playground or on a stairwell) and appeared doubtful about their school being able to stop bullying.

Results from a mixed-methods study conducted in Lithuania have provided additional insight into students' views on bullying prevention and intervention (Alifanovienė, Šapelytė, &

Valančiūtė, 2010). The participants included 176 students in Grades 4-10 attending special education schools. Individuals were presented with a closed questionnaire that included different approaches to intervening with bullying and asked to identify those they perceived as most appropriate. The most frequently selected solution included conversations with parents, which was followed by making bullies responsible for the damage and paying educative fines. Importantly, the least frequently endorsed solutions included having “peer-to-peer” groups, trying to solve it on their own without telling anyone, and keeping a diary. Girls were more likely than boys to endorse the following strategies: regular discussions between psychologist and parents of bullies and victims, regular meetings and discussions with students about bullying and empathy, class meetings during which lessons about bullying would be implemented, analyzing different bullying scenarios, using a bullying hotline, and writing diaries.

Additionally, results from the content analysis of essays written by a smaller sub-sample of 20 students in Grades 8-10 provided additional corroboratory evidence for the most appropriate solutions to bullying prevention and intervention. The students viewed their parents’ active involvement (e.g., open communication, support, and listening) as the most important approach to bullying prevention. Furthermore, ignoring bullying, specifically verbal bullying (e.g., mocking), emerged as one of the appropriate strategies to addressing bullying. Some students also suggested that wearing school uniforms to promote equality could be one of the solutions to bullying prevention, because one’s clothes could incite bullying perpetration. The remaining solutions to intervening with bullying that the students identified included holding events, projects, and seminars that increase knowledge about bullying, applying sanctions to bullies (e.g., monetary fines or punishment), and one’s maturity (e.g., students eventually grow out of bullying).

**Bullying Prevention and Intervention Programs for SWD.** Houchins et al.'s (2016) recent systematic review of peer-reviewed studies published between 1980 and 2015 yielded six evaluations of prevention and intervention programs (Espelage et al., 2015; Humphrey et al., 2013; Rahill & Teglasi, 2003; Ross & Horner, 2009; Saylor & Leach, 2009; Vessey & O'Neill, 2011) that focused directly on a decrease in bullying perpetration and/or victimization of SWD. A systematic search conducted by this researcher resulted in identifying one additional experimental study (Sullivan et al., 2015) that has been conducted since Houchins et al.'s review. Table 4 presents results from seven empirical investigations that have examined bullying prevention and intervention programs for SWD.

Table 4

*Results from Bullying Prevention and Intervention Studies for Students with Disabilities*

Article/Citation	Design	Setting	Participants & Diversity	Control	Program Description	Results
Espelage, Rose, & Polanin (2015) <i>United States</i>	Group, quasi-experimental, part of a large-scale longitudinal RCT	12 middle schools in two school districts in the Midwest United States	47 SWD, 11-12 years old, 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, 61.7% male and 38.3% female, 53.2% AA, 38.3% White, 4.3% Asian, 2.1% Biracial, 2.1% Hispanic, 46.9% LD, 15.6% ID, 15.6% SLI, 6.2% EBD, 12.5% OHI, 3.1% multiple disabilities	76 SWD, 11-12 years old, 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, 53.9% male and 46.1% female, 52.6% AA, 26.3% White, 14.5% Biracial, 6.6% Hispanic, 0% Asian, 47.4% LD, 36.8% SLI, 6.6% ID, 6.6% OHI, 2.6% EBD	<p>This was a 3-year study</p> <p>Intervention Schools: <i>Second Step: Student Success Through Prevention (SS-SSTP)</i> 41 lessons total: 15 lessons in Grade 6 and 13 lessons in Grades 7-8; respectively, a 50-min session or two 25-min sessions were implemented weekly or biweekly throughout the school year; teachers implemented the intervention and received 4 hours of training; fidelity data were not reported; lessons focused on empathy and communication, bullying, emotion regulation, problem solving, and substance abuse prevention.</p> <p>Control Schools: <i>P3: Stories of Us</i>—a bullying program that comprises two educational films and other resources focusing on increasing students' and teachers' awareness and understanding of bullying and decreasing bullying.</p>	SWD who received the <i>Second Step</i> intervention reported a significant decrease in bullying perpetration ( $\delta = -.20$ ) in comparison to SWD in the control group. There were no significant decreases in victimization and fighting for SWD in either the intervention or control group.
Humphrey, Lendrum, Barlow, Wigelsworth, & Squires	1: group, quasi-experimental. 2: longitudinal,	Schools in the United Kingdom	4,562 SWD from 308 schools, age groups: 5-6, 9-10, 11-12, 14-15, 61.6% male and	196 SWD from 15 schools, 65.3% male and 34.7% female, 40.1% moderate	A national evaluation of the <i>Achievement for all</i> (AfA) pilot study. AfA includes three different strands: Strand 1: Assessment, tracking and intervention (ATI), Strand 2:	SWD who received AfA increased their positive relationships and decreased problem behaviors and bullying. The effect sizes

Article/Citation	Design	Setting	Participants & Diversity	Control	Program Description	Results
(2013) <i>United Kingdom</i>	multi-level, natural variation design (intervention group only)		38.4% female, 38.35% moderate LD, 17.6% EBD, 3.9% ASD, 0.6% VI, 1.5% HI	LD, 7.7% EBD, 7.1% ASD, 5.6% HI, VI, and others	Structured conversations with parents (SCP), Strand 3: Provision for developing wider outcomes' (PWO). Teachers and tutors were trained and delivered interventions; fidelity data were reported.	were small: positive relationships (Cohen's $d = 0.17$ ), bullying (Cohen's $d = 0.28$ ), behavior problems (Cohen's $d = 0.26$ ).
Rahill & Teglassi (2003) <i>United States</i>	Group, quasi-experimental	Four special education centers located in a large, suburban school district that served children with EBD who required more intensive support than general education	35 SWD participated in <i>STORIES</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> grade, mean age = 9.37 years, 88.6% male and 11.4% female, all students had EBD	28 SWD participated in <i>Skillstreaming</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> grade, mean age = 10.62 years, 85.7% male and 14.3% female, all students had EBD  19 SWD participated in nonspecific counseling groups, mean age = 10.64 years, 78.9% male and 21.1% female, all students had EBD	<i>STORIES</i> utilizes discussion of stories and emotionally charged situations to increase students' social information processing and help them develop higher cognitive skills; groups ranged from 3-7 students.  Control Groups: <i>Skillstreaming</i> included modeling and role-playing of different social and behavioral skills; groups ranged from 3-8 students.  Nonspecific counseling group focused on peer relationship problems, frustration with school, and problems with teachers; no structured curriculum was used; groups ranged from three to nine students.  All three intervention groups attended 40-45 min. weekly sessions with a total of 25 sessions; the interventionists included school psychologists, one of the authors, and doctoral students; fidelity data were not reported.	Teacher- and peer-ratings showed no significant decrease in bullying behaviors for any of the three groups; the <i>STORIES</i> participants obtained significantly lower scores on the Teacher BASC BSI than the <i>Skillstreaming</i> participants; however, the effect size was small; there were no significant improvements on the Social Competence and Antisocial subscales of the SSBS.
Ross & Horner (2009) <i>United States</i>	Single-case, multiple baseline	Three different schools in	Two SWD, 4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> grade, both boys, they had	None	<i>BP-PBS</i> was a school-wide approach that embedded additional bully prevention strategies within SW-PBS.	Observations conducted during lunch recess indicated a 72% decrease in the mean

Article/Citation	Design	Setting	Participants & Diversity	Control	Program Description	Results
		one district in Oregon, which implemented SW-PBS with 80% fidelity	IEPs Four peers without disabilities, 3 <sup>rd</sup> –5 <sup>th</sup> grade, two boys and two girls		The aim of BP-PBS was to reduce peer reinforcement for bullying behaviors. Students were taught a three-step strategy: “Stop, Walk, Talk;” fidelity data were reported.	level of verbal and physical bullying per day. The two students with IEPs demonstrated a 79% and 76% reduction in their mean level of verbal and physical bullying.
Saylor & Leach (2009) <i>United States</i>	Group, quasi-experimental	Two middle schools and one high school	48 students, 85% attended MS and 15% attended HS,  24 SWD (50% of the sample), mean age = 13.79, 62.5% male and 37.5% female, 69.6% Caucasian, 30.4% non-white, they attended self-contained classrooms, 19.4% LD, 17.2% EBD, 19.4% SLI, 19.4% severe developmental delays or disabilities, 3.2% ASD, 19.4% mild or moderate ID, 3.2% CP, 16.1% DS, 22.6% ADD or ADHD, 9.7% severe allergies, 22.6% chronic health condition,	None	<i>Peer EXPRESS</i> was implemented for 24-27 weeks; SWD and peers without disabilities participated in a shared recreational activity at least once a week. The main objective of <i>Peer EXPRESS</i> was to provide SWD with authentic opportunities for inclusion and socialization with peers without disabilities; fidelity data were not reported	Self-perceived social support from classmates significantly increased for peers without disabilities, but social support from close friends and classmates decreased for SWD (Cohen’s $d = -0.69$ ) <sup>b</sup> . SWD’s level of self-perceived victimization decreased (Cohen’s $d = 0.40$ ) <sup>b</sup> by the end of the school year; but it was still higher than self-perceived victimization of peers without disabilities.

Article/Citation	Design	Setting	Participants & Diversity	Control	Program Description	Results
			3.2% HI, 16.1% VI			
Sullivan, Sutherland, Farrell, & Taylor (2015) <i>United States</i>	A cluster-randomized design	Two urban middle schools and one rural school located in Southeastern United States, 28 classrooms, including health and physical or enrichment classrooms	105 SWD, attending 6 <sup>th</sup> grade, 4% SLI, 11% LD, 2% ID, 3% EBD, 4% OHI *These percentages were calculated based on the entire sample.	352 peers without disabilities attending 6th grade	<i>Second Step</i> was implemented for one semester and included 15 lessons focusing on empathy building, anger management, dealing with bullying, resisting peer and gang pressure. The intervention was delivered by five interventionists who were the study staff; fidelity data were reported.	Teacher ratings indicated that the level of relational victimization significantly decreased for SWD in comparison to their peers in the control group.
Vessey & O'Neill (2011) <i>United States</i>	A two-phased, mixed-method design	11 schools total: three schools PreK-5, one school K-5, two schools Grades 1-5, one school Grades 4-5, one school K-7, three schools Grades 6-8	65 SWD, 8-14 years old, 66.2% male and 33.8% female, 86.5% Caucasian, 13.5% diverse backgrounds, various disabilities such as mental health problems, behavioral, developmental disabilities, and physical conditions	None	The intervention adapted materials from <i>Take a Stand</i> , <i>Lend a Hand</i> , and <i>Stop Bullying Now</i> . Group size ranged from three to eight students; 11 school nurses facilitated the intervention which included 12 sessions lasting 30 min and implemented every other week for a total of 24 weeks; fidelity data were not reported.	Results indicated that SWD reported significantly less teasing (Cohen's $d = 0.34$ ) <sup>a</sup> after the intervention and their self-concept increased (Cohen's $d = -0.25$ ) <sup>a</sup>

*Note:* RCT = randomized control trial; SWD = students with disabilities; IEP = individualized education plan; AA = African American; LD = learning disability; SLI = speech and language impairment; EBD = emotional behavioral disability; OHI = other health impairment; ID = intellectual disability; CP = cerebral palsy; DS = Down Syndrome; HI = hearing impairment; VI = visual impairment; ADHD = attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; BASC = Behavior Assessment System for Children; BSI = Behavior Symptoms Index; SSBS = School Social Behavior Scales; SW-PBS = school-wide positive behavior system; BP-PBS = Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support; MS = middle school; HS = high school

<sup>a</sup>Effect size values were not reported by the authors of this study, but they were calculated and reported in Houchins et al.'s (2016) systematic review.

Rahill and Teglas (2003) evaluated the effectiveness of *STORIES* in comparison to *Skillstreaming* and nonspecific counseling. The *STORIES* participants included 35 primarily male students with EBD who attended self-contained educational centers in Grades 2-6. *STORIES* intervention focused on increasing students' social information processing skills in order to improve their social competence. Utilizing situational stories, students analyzed a variety of situations that could trigger emotional responses and then explored different responses and solutions. The goal was to help students develop the problem-solving skills required to interpret daily situations in which problem behaviors may occur. *Skillstreaming* included modeling and role-playing of different social and behavioral skills such as classroom survival skills, friendship-making skills, and dealing with feelings. Non-specific counseling focused on peer relationship problems, teacher problems, and coping with school frustration.

Importantly, Rahill and Teglas (2003) used several different measures to examine the intervention treatment effects. Results from teacher- and peer-ratings did not show any significant decrease in the bullying behaviors of SWD. Similarly, there were no significant differences on the Social Competence and Antisocial subscales of the *School Social Behavior Scales* (SSBS). SWD participating in *STORIES* obtained a lower Behavior System Index (BSI) on the *Behavior Assessment System for Children* (BASC) Teacher Report, which indicated a decrease in overall problem behaviors (e.g., aggression, hyperactivity, anxiety, depression, and atypicality) in comparison to SWD receiving the *Skillstreaming* intervention. Furthermore, a sample of sessions in each group was videotaped, transcribed, and then coded. Results indicated that SWD participating in *STORIES* demonstrated a higher level of cognition at each point of assessment (early, middle, late phase of intervention) than SWD receiving *Skillstreaming*. These data were corroborated with ratings obtained from group leaders who rated SWD receiving the

*STORIES* intervention higher for their use of cognitive processes in the middle and late phase of the intervention, as compared to the *Skillstreaming* group participants.

Furthermore, Ross and Horner (2009) developed and conducted field testing of *Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support* (BP-PBS) to obtain evidence of its effectiveness. BP-PBS is a school-wide approach built on the premise that bullying is reinforced and maintained by peer attention. Bullies are likely to receive attention from peers who observe or witness bullying and may reinforce it by laughing, fighting back, or not taking any action. BP-PBS incorporates a Tier 1 strategy: “Stop, Walk, Talk” into the existing School Wide-Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS). As Ross and Horner noted, the “Stop, Walk, Talk” strategy aims to extinguish the bullying behavior by withdrawing peer attention, which may have, over time, reinforced the behavior of bullies.

Importantly, the construct of bullying is not explicitly referenced in this three-step strategy. Instead, the focus in BP-PBS is on responding to problem behaviors that are counter to a school-wide rule of “Be Respectful.” All students are taught to use a stop signal when they witness or experience disrespectful behavior. If the problem behavior does not cease, students are taught to walk away or help the victim walk away from the situation. If the disrespectful behavior further continues after students have already used a stop signal and attempted to walk away, they are taught to talk to an adult. Students are taught the three-step strategy during a one-time 45-min session, which is followed by brief 2-3-min weekly reviews in locations where disrespectful behavior occurs more often (e.g., playground or cafeteria). Teachers are trained to reinforce students at a high rate for using the “Stop, Walk, Talk” strategy and for practicing it daily. Additionally, BP-PBS involves a school-wide “review and resolve” procedure that school staff members are expected to follow when they receive a report of inappropriate behavior.

Ross and Horner's (2009) single-case study evaluating BP-PBS included six students in Grades 3-5 attending a school district in Oregon, two of whom had IEPs. Principals from three different schools nominated students who had bullied their peers in the past. In addition to principals' nominations, each of the participating students scored well below the average range on the *Social Skills Rating System*. The primary outcome in this study was reducing physical bullying (e.g., hitting, biting, and kicking) and verbal bullying (e.g., teasing, taunting, and negative gestures). To evaluate the effectiveness of BP-PBS, the students were observed during lunch recess 4-5 days per week. The playground supervisors were expected to check in with the students, help them practice the "Stop, Walk, Talk" strategy, provide verbal praise for using it, and generate office discipline referrals (ODRs) if bullying occurred. Rose and Horner found a 72% decrease in the mean level of verbal and physical bullying per day. Importantly, the two students with IEPs demonstrated a 79% and 76% decrease, respectively, in the mean level of verbal and physical bullying per observation. Additionally, observations of victims and bystanders indicated a significant increase in their use of the stop signal, walking away, and reducing positive or negative attention.

Although Ross and Horner's (2009) study yielded initial evidence for the effectiveness of BP-PBS, it needs to be noted that only direct forms of bullying were measured. However, Ross and Horner noted that this study has important implications for bullying prevention and intervention. Instead of using complex and ambiguous definitions of bullying, the researchers posited that it might be worthwhile to focus on observable problem behaviors that are likely easier for students and staff to identify. They also emphasized the importance of conducting a thorough analysis of environmental variables reinforcing these problematic behaviors.

Saylor and Leach (2009) examined *Peer EXPRESS* (EXperiences to Promote Recreation,

Exposure, and Social Skills) implemented with 24 SWD and 24 peers without disabilities attending middle schools and high schools. The main objective of *Peer EXPRESS* was to provide SWD with authentic opportunities for inclusion and socialization with their peers without disabilities. Thus, SWD and their peers without disabilities participated in a shared recreational activity (e.g., arts, sports, camps, dances, football games, and service projects) at least once a week.

Prior to implementing *Peer EXPRESS*, the participants completed the *Reynolds Victimization Scales* and SWD scored significantly higher on bullying victimization and anxiety related to potential peer violence (e.g., harassment, physical injury, and school safety) than their peers without disabilities. In contrast, SWD and their peers without disabilities did not differ in self-reported bullying perpetration and social support from classmates, close friends, teachers, and parents. Upon the completion of *Peer EXPRESS* (24-27 weeks), the level of self-reported bullying perpetration remained low for both SWD and their peers without disabilities. Importantly, self-perceived social support from classmates significantly increased by the end of the year for peers without disabilities, while SWD reported a decrease in social support from both close friends and classmates. Furthermore, SWD reported a decrease in self-perceived victimization and fear of violence by the end of the school year; however, their levels of victimization were still higher in comparison to those of their peers without disabilities. Saylor and Leach (2009) concluded that supplemental and “token” inclusion activities may not be sufficient to substantially decrease victimization of SWD and increase their peer support.

Vessey and O’Neill (2011) conducted another study focused on evaluating the effectiveness of bullying prevention and intervention for 65 SWD, ages 8-14, who were at risk for teasing and bullying. This intervention comprised 12 sessions delivered for 30 min every 2

weeks and was facilitated by school nurses. Materials were adapted from resources developed for the national anti-bullying campaign *Take a Stand, Lend a Hand, Stop Bullying Now* ([www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov)). The intervention focused on helping SWD develop skills to deal with teasing/bullying situations and incorporated 12 webisodes with cartoon characters. In addition, informational “tip sheets” for parents as well as posters and public service announcements were developed.

Results from the *Child-Adolescent Teasing Scale* (CATS) revealed that SWD reported significantly less teasing after the intervention and their self-concept assessed with the *Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale* (PHCSCS) increased. Furthermore, results from a focus group conducted with the school nurses indicated that SWD felt more socially accepted by participating in the intervention group and established new friendships with other participants. The school nurses shared that SWD benefited from having a safe place to talk openly about their experiences with teasing.

Additionally, Humphrey and colleagues (2013) conducted a national evaluation of a pilot program *Achievement for All* (AfA) implemented in primary and secondary schools in the United Kingdom. The AfA represented an integrated model of prevention that aimed to support schools in providing better learning outcomes for SWD. A total of 4,562 SWD across 308 intervention schools participated in this intervention. The AfA included three strands, each with a different objective. Strand 1 focused on setting curricular targets for students, implementing appropriately matched interventions and instructional strategies, and tracking students’ progress. Strand 2 focused on home-school connection/collaboration, which involved three 40-60-min structured conversations among a teacher, parent, and student with a goal of establishing priorities and developing a plan and contract for the student. Finally, Strand 3 focused on embedding targeted

interventions within the existing school-wide supports. These interventions aimed to increase attendance and positive behaviors, decrease bullying of SWD, and increase positive relationships. Humphrey and colleagues provided a few examples of possible targeted interventions such as mentoring, restorative justice approaches, and social-emotional learning resources.

Humphrey et al. (2013) utilized the *Wider Outcomes Survey for Teachers* (WOST) to measure the effect of AfA on positive relationships, behavior problems, and bullying of SWD. Results indicated a small but significant decrease in bullying of SWD and behavior problems as well as improvement in their positive relationships. Importantly, the researchers examined school contextual factors and individual variables related to increased outcomes. They found a greater reduction in bullying in the secondary schools, in which AfA leaders joined the school leadership team. Other key components of the AfA that were likely to yield better outcomes included the dosage and frequency of structured conversations between teachers and parents that focused on discussing and reviewing students' progress. At the student level, girls with disabilities responded better to the AfA than boys with disabilities, and SWD who had higher academic skills, as compared to those with lower academic skills, responded better. Conversely, the researchers found relatively poor outcomes for older SWD, those with EBD, and SWD who were eligible for free and reduced lunch. Overall, Humphrey et al. concluded that the AfA could be a promising approach to increasing a wide range of outcomes for SWD.

Two empirical studies (Espelage et al., 2015; Sullivan et al., 2015) have recently evaluated the effectiveness of *Second Step*. This program is regarded as a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum and is part of the larger SEL framework that promotes the development of competencies related to awareness of self and others, positive attitudes and

values, responsible decision making, and social interaction skills (Payton et al., 2000). *Second Step* incorporates scripted and interactive lessons, classroom and small-group discussions, individual work, homework, and media-rich content (e.g., use of videos). Lessons focus on empathy, communication, bullying, emotional regulation, problem solving, and substance abuse prevention. In the Espelage et al. (2015) study, teachers implemented *Second Step* with 47 SWD from two middle school districts in the Midwest United States over the course of 3 years. Nearly half of the students (46.9%) in this study had LD. Because the participating school districts did not provide information about where the *Second Step* curriculum was delivered, Espelage and colleagues were not able to examine the extent to which SWD received this intervention in the general education setting with their peers without disabilities and/or in self-contained settings. The control group of 76 SWD received the *P3: Stories of Us - Bullying Program*. With respect to *Second Step*, two of the 15 lessons delivered in Grade 6 focused specifically on bullying, and three of the 13 lessons implemented in Grades 7-8 explicitly addressed bullying.

Espelage and colleagues (2015) used the *Illinois Bully Scale* to measure bullying perpetration, the *University of Illinois Victimization Scale* to assess bullying victimization, and the *University of Illinois Fighting Scale* to measure physical fighting behavior. Results indicated that SWD receiving *Second Step* self-reported a significant decrease in bullying perpetration, as compared to SWD in the control group. In contrast, there were no significant differences in self-reported victimization and physical fighting between SWD participating in the *Second Step* intervention group and the control group. In summarizing the results from this study, the researchers concluded that *Second Step* is an SEL curriculum that has the potential to reduce bullying perpetration among SWD.

Sullivan et al.'s (2015) evaluation of *Second Step* also involved middle school students;

however, they used a larger sample of SWD ( $n=105$ ) in Grade 6 in comparison to their peers without disabilities ( $n=352$ ). Similar to Espelage et al. (2015), nearly half of the participating SWD had LD. *Second Step* was implemented in physical education and health or enrichment classes by four interventionists who were part of the study staff. Sullivan and colleagues did not provide information on the extent to which SWD were educated in the general education setting.

Sullivan et al. (2015) utilized as outcome measures both self-reports and teacher reports such as the *Problem Behavior Frequency Scales* (PBFS) student and teacher forms, and two additional teacher reports, including the *Child Behavior Checklist* (CBCL) and the *Emotional Regulation Checklist* (ERC). The specific subscales on the PBFS related to bullying perpetration included Overt Aggression and Relational Aggression whereas the Overt Victimization and Relational Victimization scales were used to measure bullying victimization. Results revealed no significant differences in overt aggression and relational aggression between SWD participating in *Second Step* and their peers without disabilities in the control group, and this finding was consistent across both teacher and student reports. Importantly, teacher reports of victimization indicated a significant decrease for SWD receiving *Second Step* as compared to their peers without disabilities who increased their levels of victimization. In contrast, student self-reports did not yield a significant difference in victimization between the intervention and control groups. Additionally, teacher reports indicated no significant effect on the emotional regulation of SWD.

### **Multi-Tiered Approach to Bullying Prevention and Intervention**

Given the overrepresentation of SWD in a bullying dynamic and limited intervention studies for these vulnerable youth, increasingly more bullying scholars propose that bullying prevention and intervention efforts need to be embedded within a multi-tiered preventive

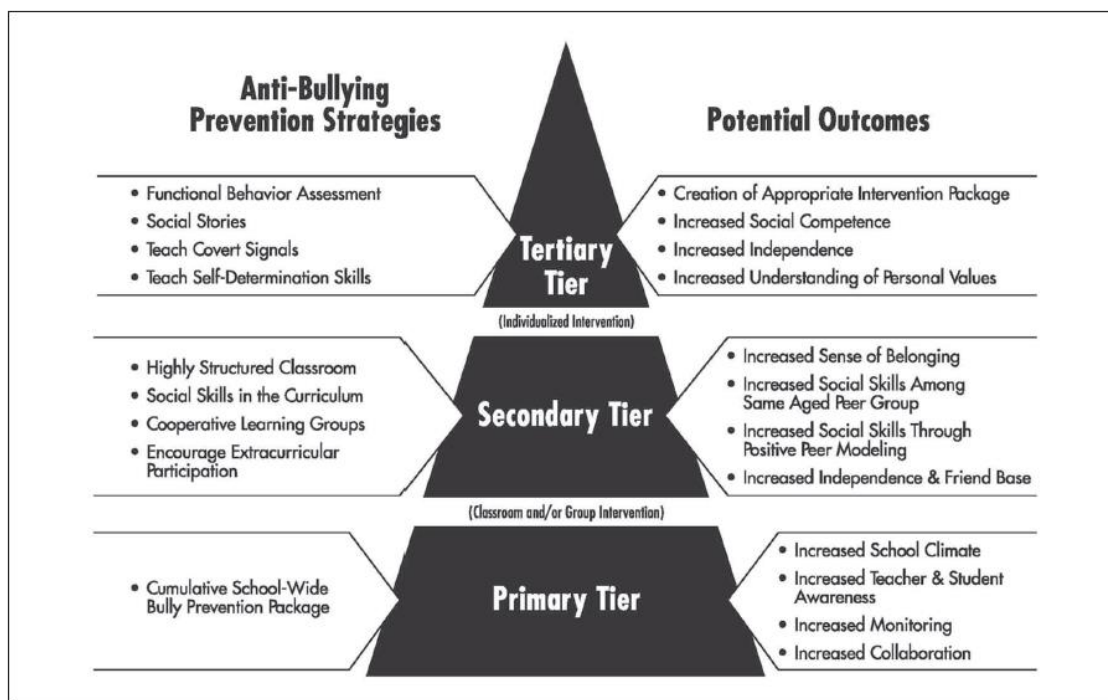
framework such as PBIS (Bradshaw, 2013, 2015; Cook et al., 2010; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Ross & Horner, 2009, 2014). They maintain that PBIS provides an organizational and system structure for a multi-context and multi-tiered approach to bullying prevention, particularly for SWD (Bradshaw, 2013; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Sugai & Horner, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2015).

PBIS represents a system approach and process in which school personnel implement multi-tiered behavioral interventions, student progress is monitored, and interventions are intensified or lessened based on the collected data (Sugai & Horner, 2009). The origins of PBIS could be traced back to the reauthorization of the IDEA in 1997 (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Schools were charged with a legal and educational obligation to utilize scientifically based positive behavior interventions and supports in order to address student behaviors that interfere with his or her learning or that of others (Sugai & Horner, 2006, 2009). Subsequently, the U.S. Department of Education established the National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in 1997 (Sugai & Horner, 2009). This led to the development of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) which represents a multi-tiered approach to providing students with a continuum of evidence-based behavioral interventions that are intensified based on their needs (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010; Sugai & Horner, 2009).

An adoption of SWPBS starts with establishing a PBIS team that leads data-based decision making (Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans, Ialongo, & Leaf, 2008; Ross & Horner, 2014). School-wide behavioral expectations are operationally defined, displayed in classrooms and hallways, explicitly taught, and reinforced by all staff with agreed-upon school-wide rewards. A universal reward system creates a positive school culture and climate, and it increases the

acquisition and maintenance of behavioral skills (Ross & Horner, 2014). At the same time, the school personnel respond to problem behaviors with consistent consequences and collect behavioral data (e.g., ODRs) to ensure data-based decision making (Horner et al., 2009). Students feel reassured that school personnel respond to problem behavior including bullying (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). Full-scale implementation of SWPBS occurs over the course of 2-3 years, and it involves ongoing training support (Horner et al., 2009). As of May 2018, there were 25,911 schools nationwide that have implemented PBIS framework to promote prosocial behaviors and to decrease problem behaviors ([www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)).

Given the emerging evidence of the effectiveness of SWPBS (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Horner et al., 2009; Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2012), and the current prevailing educational trend to implement multi-tiered systems of supports in schools (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012), researchers propose that bullying prevention needs to be integrated within a multi-component framework of prevention (Blake et al., 2016; Bradshaw, 2013, 2015; Cook et al., 2010; Houchins et al., 2016; Rose et al., 2009; Rose, Allison, et al. 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Ross & Horner, 2009, 2014; Sullivan et al., 2015). Figure 1 demonstrates a model of bullying prevention and intervention embedded within a multi-tiered framework (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). The section that follows provides an overview of recommended practices and strategies at each level of this bullying prevention and intervention multi-tiered model.



*Figure 1.* From “Intervention Strategies and Potential Outcomes for Bully Prevention within a Multi Tiered Framework,” by C. A. Rose and L. E. Monda-Amaya, 2012, *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 48(2), p. 103. Copyright 2012 by SAGE Publications Inc. Reprinted with permission.

**Primary Bullying Prevention (Tier 1).** Primary bullying prevention encompasses universal interventions that focus on increasing awareness about bullying and involve the whole school as well as parents and other community members (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011; Rose et al., 2009; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Swearer, Espelage, et al., 2010). These universal bullying prevention efforts require close collaboration and problem solving among various stakeholders (Bradshaw & Waasdorp, 2009; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012) to set a particular expectation for desired behavior and a lack of tolerance for bullying of anyone (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). At the school-wide level, the primary bullying prevention typically comprises of adopting school-wide anti-bullying rules, increased monitoring of school areas where bullying occurs (hot spots), implementing classroom awareness activities, and teacher awareness and intervention training (Bradshaw, 2013; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012). Parents are provided with

training to strengthen home-school connections and to increase disclosure of bullying incidents. At the community level, local businesses (e.g., doctors, police officers, and storekeepers) show their support of preventing and reducing bullying by getting involved in various anti-bullying campaigns (Bradshaw, 2013).

Positive and safe school climate is one of the key aspects of primary bullying prevention and intervention efforts (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Swearer et al., 2009). Students involved in bullying tend to have poor perceptions of school climate and feel unsafe and disconnected from school, especially victims and bully-victims (O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Sawyer, 2009). Thus, as part of the primary bullying prevention, it is recommended to assess the school climate in order to examine the prevailing attitudes and beliefs that might be reinforcing bullying and to determine the overall level of bullying perpetration and victimization at school (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Swearer et al., 2009).

Although research shows that students develop a greater awareness of bullying and less favorable attitudes related to bullying in response to primary bullying prevention and intervention, the self-reported level of bullying perpetration and/or victimization does not always decrease (Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Merrell et al., 2008). In fact, within this multi-tiered model of bullying prevention and intervention, it is believed that approximately 80%-85% of students may respond to universal bullying prevention supports (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012). Yet, researchers agree that primary bullying prevention focusing on the whole school environment is an essential step in both ensuring positive and safe school climate and reducing bullying (Bradshaw & Wassdorp, 2009).

**Secondary Interventions (Tier 2).** While approximately 80% of the student population could be expected to respond to primary bullying prevention efforts, researchers have posited

that 15%-20% of students who are at greater risk for bullying involvement may require more intensive Tier 2 interventions (Cook et al., 2010; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). Schools need to use data to appropriately identify students who are at risk for bullying involvement and thus require Tier 2 bullying interventions. These supports may include specific curricular programs or teacher-facilitated strategies (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012) that aim at decreasing risk factors and increasing protective factors (Mishna, 2003).

Importantly, as part of Tier 2 bullying prevention and intervention, Rose, Allison, et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of effective classroom structure. Rose and Monda-Amaya (2012) noted that structured classrooms need to have a clear definition of bullying, specific behavior expectations, clear procedures for reporting bullying, positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviors, and procedures for responding to the incidents of reported or observed bullying. Explicit classroom expectations need to be taught and reinforced to communicate to students that bullying is unacceptable and to reassure them that school staff will respond to its occurrence with consistent consequences.

Furthermore, since poor social skills and low peer support are predictive of bullying involvement among students both with and without disabilities (Blake et al., 2016; Cook et al., 2010; Farmer, Wike, Alexander, Rodkin, & Mehtaji, 2015), targeted Tier 2 interventions need to focus on helping students practice social skills and facilitating peer interactions (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012). Thus, social skills training for SWD and other youth at risk for bullying needs to be incorporated into the daily curriculum as part of secondary interventions (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). This may include role-playing, social vignettes, conflict resolution, or character education that would allow for social

problem solving (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). Additionally, Rose, Allison, et al. (2012) have recommended promoting social skills through evidence-based practices such as differentiated instruction to provide SWD with choices and lessen their teacher dependency, one of the bullying risk factors. Ultimately, as part of secondary prevention and intervention efforts, SWD need to develop social competence, self-worth, and a sense of belonging in their educational and social settings (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012), which could buffer them from bullying.

Since one of the main aspects of secondary level of prevention and intervention is creating frequent opportunities for social interaction for SWD (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008), systematic inclusive practices are particularly pivotal to bullying prevention for SWD (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012). Conscious structuring of learning groups is one of the inclusive practices that may provide opportunities for learning, practicing, and validating social skills of SWD (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012). This would likely increase a sense of belonging for SWD and promote their acceptance among their peers without disabilities. Particularly, cooperative learning groups provide SWD with opportunities to develop and practice social skills and have them validated by their same-aged peers (Mishna, 2003; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). These learning groups need to be monitored and regularly evaluated to ensure that strengths and weaknesses of students are considered and positive peer models are paired with students with social skill deficits (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012). Additionally, Rose and Monda-Amaya (2012) have stressed the importance of providing students with explicit group tasks to ensure that SWD have specific responsibilities in cooperative learning groups. Importantly, Rose and Monda-Amaya recommended that SWD practice and role-play expected social interactions with familiar adults or peers. They also cautioned against any unnecessary isolation of SWD that could further

exacerbate their bullying.

Ongoing training to ensure teachers' efficacy in identifying and responding to bullying is key to ensuring the effectiveness of secondary classroom-level supports (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012), especially since many teachers report being unprepared to address bullying (Rose et al., 2012a). Particularly, teachers' awareness and knowledge of protective and risk factors related to bullying is necessary to ensure that SWD are provided with appropriate secondary supports (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012).

**Tertiary Interventions (Tier 3).** Rose, Allison, et al. (2012) noted that bullying may occur even within the most structured classrooms and a smaller number of students, approximately 5% of the school community, which could likely include SWD, will require more individualized social-emotional and behavioral interventions focusing on skills related to chronic bullying or victimization. One of the main evidence-based practices recommended for students who repeatedly bully others or are chronically victimized is conducting an FBA; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). It is important to recognize that each behavior is functional and communicative, and some SWD develop bullying behaviors in response to prolonged victimization (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012). FBA is a problem-solving data collection process initiated to identify events, people, tasks, and activities that predict (antecedents) and maintain (consequences) challenging behaviors in order to develop a comprehensive positive behavior support plan (Sugai et al., 2000; Sugai & Horner, 2002). As an outcome of FBA, a student's problem behavior is clearly described in observable and measurable terms and a hypothesis that describes the relationships among the problem behavior, antecedents, and consequences is developed. An effectively completed FBA becomes the basis for developing and implementing a BIP to reduce the risk factors associated with bullying and increase self-

determination skills for both bullies and victims (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

It is important to note that increased understanding of how specific disability characteristics (e.g., lack of self-control or deficits in Theory of Mind) contribute to bullying perpetration and victimization is essential to developing appropriate tertiary supports (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). Researchers agree that SWD need to increase social competence as part of tertiary supports (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). This involves teaching them how to decode social skills, interpret situations appropriately, and utilize a decision-making process to respond effectively. A systematic use of social stories is one of the recommended strategies to increase SWD's social competence and development of positive friend bases (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). Supporting SWD in developing friendships would promote peer support that buffers them from victimization.

Additionally, as part of tertiary interventions, SWD need a support system that focuses on increasing their independence and self-determination skills (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). Since research shows that helplessness and dependence on adults are risk factors that may increase the likelihood of chronic victimization, increasing students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses related to disability and the importance of their accommodations and self-advocacy skills could help them gain independence and self-determination that buffers them from victimization (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

## **Summary of Research and a Roadmap for the Current Study**

Individual studies may vary in reported results, yet the literature reviewed in this chapter provided compelling evidence that youth with high-incidence disabilities are overrepresented in the bullying dynamic and require more intensive and individualized interventions. Notably, research on the effectiveness of bullying prevention and intervention for SWD is in its infancy, and few studies that have examined direct and/or indirect outcomes for this population of students provide modest evidence that bullying prevention and intervention programs can be effective.

On the other hand, as indicated in this chapter, there are many studies evaluating the effectiveness of bullying prevention and intervention programs with general education population. These programs are more likely to increase students' and teachers' awareness of bullying and promote anti-bullying norms and attitudes than to reduce the level of bullying perpetration and/or victimization. The intensity and duration of the interventions are among some of the key elements that are more likely to yield positive results.

Although there is limited empirical research on bullying interventions for youth with high-incidence disabilities, school personnel in American schools have a legal and educational obligation to address bullying quickly, consistently, and systematically. As stated in the 2013 "Dear Colleague Letter," bullying of SWD that interferes with their ability to receive meaningful educational benefit is considered to be a denial of FAPE under the IDEA. Thus, OSERS emphasized the importance of making sure that SWD's needs are met through their IEPs and that additional services are identified in the aftermath of bullying.

SWD receive support from various school personnel who may participate in IEP decisions and thus play a substantial role in bullying prevention and intervention directly or

indirectly. In fact, because bullying is considered a systemic problem within the socio-ecological model of bullying prevention and intervention, close attention is paid to how adults respond and intervene with bullying. Studies have shown that teachers tend to underestimate the prevalence of bullying and have difficulty differentiating bullying from other aggressive behaviors. Notably, the likelihood of students reporting bullying to teachers largely depends on whether they perceive their teachers as being able to intervene effectively. Findings from studies examining bullying experiences of other school personnel, including school administrators and related services personnel, suggest that there is a need for a more systematic approach to bullying prevention and intervention.

The likely overrepresentation of SWD in the bullying dynamic, the limited research on the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions for this population of students, and the systemic nature of bullying have led bullying experts to advocate for a multi-tiered approach to bullying prevention and intervention. It is conceivable that school personnel might be able to address bullying prevention and intervention within a multi-tiered framework in a more systematic manner at the school-wide, classroom, and individual levels benefiting all students, but particularly reducing bullying among SWD. Within a multi-level framework such as PBIS, various school personnel are involved in the implementation of school-wide, targeted, and individualized interventions that may benefit SWD. Thus, a study that examines bullying prevention and intervention for SWD from the perspective of various school personnel who serve in different roles in a middle school that has adopted PBIS can illuminate what has been accomplished and where the field needs to go next.

### III. METHODS

The primary aim of this study was to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and/or victimization of students with high-incidence disabilities in a middle school that has effectively implemented a multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention. I employed qualitative inquiry and this chapter describes the research design, including the selection of the setting and recruitment of participants, as well as data collection and data analysis procedures. This chapter ends with a discussion of reliability and validity of the data.

#### **Qualitative Inquiry**

The extant bullying literature has relied predominantly on quantitative inquiry to advance knowledge about bullying (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Researchers utilize cross-sectional survey and correlational designs to determine the prevalence of bullying and psychosocial correlates as well as experimental and quasi-experimental pretest-posttest group designs to determine the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs. In a review of empirical studies conducted between the years of 2000 and 2004, Powell, Mihalas, Onwuegbuzie, Suldo, and Daley (2008) found that of the 75 studies focusing on bullying, only seven utilized qualitative inquiry. Because many research questions remain either unanswered or only partially answered through quantitative inquiry, a growing number of researchers propose utilizing qualitative methodologies to advance the existing knowledge about the bullying phenomenon (Patton et al., 2015; Thornberg, 2011; Torrance, 2000).

Qualitative inquiry provides an interpretive and holistic lens for studying a complex phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative researchers employ a “systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature of a phenomenon within a particular context”

(Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005, p. 195). Therefore, the goal of qualitative research is to explain *what* is happening, and *how* and *why* it is happening.

Qualitative studies explore opinions, attitudes, and beliefs of all stakeholders involved in special education, therefore generating descriptive and procedural knowledge (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Most importantly, qualitative researchers can provide space for voices of individuals who historically have been disenfranchised (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Youth with disabilities are overrepresented within the bullying dynamic as bullies, victims, and bully-victims. Research on bullying prevention and interventions for SWD is limited, and recently, American scholars have been advocating for embedding anti-bullying efforts within a multi-tiered framework, which would provide SWD with school-wide, classroom-wide, and targeted individualized prevention and intervention. I employed qualitative inquiry to describe the nuances of how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying of students with high-incidence disabilities who are served in diverse educational placements in a middle school that has successfully adopted a multi-tiered framework.

### **Case Study Design**

Through a case study, I explored a contemporary and social phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2014). Case study research is particularly advisable when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are blurred (Yin, 2014). Since bullying is a systemic and context-rich social phenomenon that results from the dynamics among various contextual and individual factors (Espelage, 2014; Rose & Espelage, 2012), single-case study is a suitable research design to examine bullying prevention and intervention for students with high-incidence disabilities.

I employed an embedded single-case study design with four different units of analysis (Yin, 2014), including general education teachers, special education teachers, related services personnel, and school administrators (see Figure 2). These school personnel play distinctive roles in enacting bullying prevention and intervention, and effective interventions require multidisciplinary support; various stakeholders need to take responsibility for reducing bullying among SWD (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012). Thus, by embedding four units of analysis in this single-case study design, I was able to examine and describe bullying prevention and intervention for students with high-incidence disabilities in greater operational detail (Yin, 2014).

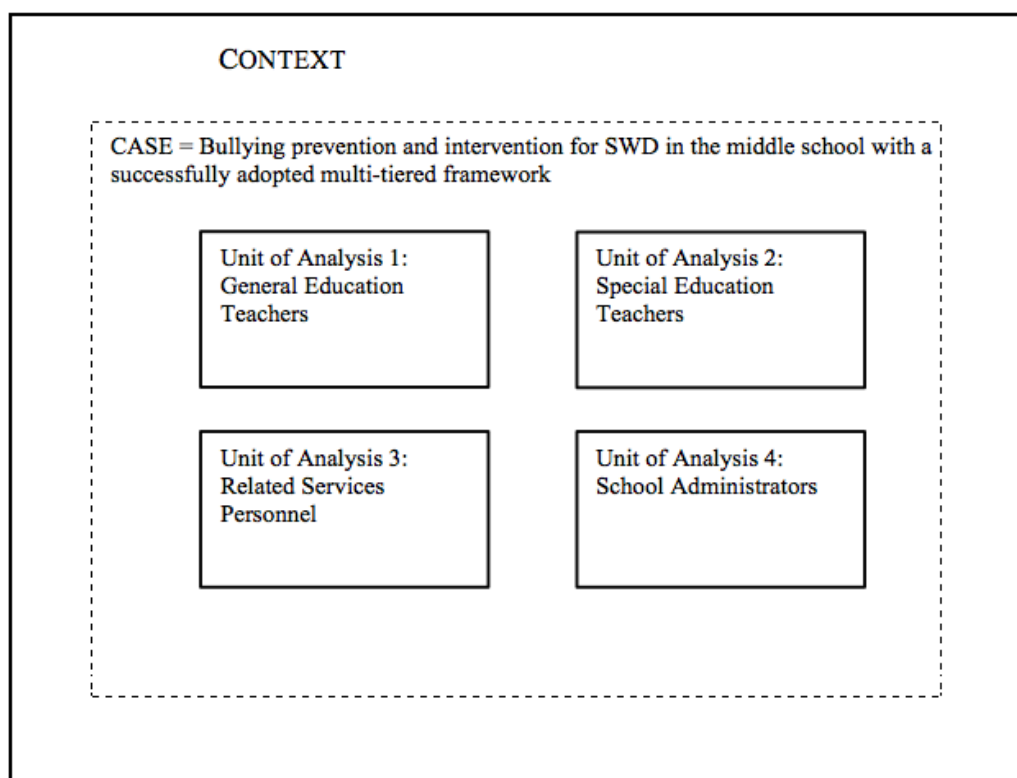


Figure 2. Embedded single-case study design. Adapted from “Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies,” by R. K. Yin, 2014, *Case study research: Design and methods* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), p. 50. Copyright 2014 by SAGE Publications.

Importantly, one of the main rationales for employing a single-case study design in this investigation was that it involved a *critical* case (Yin, 2014). I collected evidence from multiple sources and several key informants to describe the nuances of how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying of youth with high-incidence disabilities in one specific middle school that has implemented PBIS with a high level of fidelity. Thus, it is safe to say that this investigation was a response to the call put forth by researchers to integrate bullying prevention and intervention within a multi-tiered framework of prevention such as PBIS (Blake et al., 2016; Bradshaw, 2013, 2015; Cook et al., 2010; Houchins et al., 2016; Rose et al., 2009; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Ross & Horner, 2009, 2014; Sullivan et al., 2015). Through this *critical* case study, I aimed to confirm, challenge, and extend the multi-tiered model of bully prevention and intervention that many researchers endorse as a conceivable approach to supporting all students, but specifically SWD who are at increased risk for bullying.

In sum, the single case in this study was defined as bullying prevention and intervention enacted by school personnel for youth with high-incidence disabilities in a middle school that has successfully adopted a multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention. Although I conducted this case study in spring 2017 over the course of 3 months, the time frame of bullying prevention and intervention efforts for SWD that I examined included the 2016-17 school year.

As recommended by Yin (2014), based on my research questions, I identified several theoretical propositions prior to data collection, which are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

*Theoretical Propositions for the Case Study*

Study Questions	Theoretical Propositions
Research Question 1	<p>A middle school with successfully adopted PBIS will have positive school climate, which sets expectations for desired behavior and a lack of tolerance for bullying of anyone.</p> <p>Prosocial behaviors will be universally and explicitly taught and reinforced which, consequently, prevents and/or reduces bullying of SWD.</p> <p>PBIS creates a social culture of proactive and systematic approach to addressing problem behaviors, which increases the likelihood that SWD receive more targeted anti-bullying interventions.</p> <p>PBIS creates a collaborative environment in which school personnel will work smarter - not harder. Bullying prevention and intervention efforts will be aligned and integrated within PBIS.</p>
Research Question 2	<p>School personnel in a middle school with a successfully adopted multi-tiered framework, such as PBIS, will share a universal definition of bullying.</p> <p>School personnel will respond to bullying of SWD in a consistent manner in accordance with the school anti-bullying policy and best practices.</p>
Research Question 3	<p>School personnel will utilize similar components of bullying prevention and intervention to increase the protective factors of SWD involved in bullying.</p> <p>The elements of bullying prevention and intervention utilized with SWD will be aligned with the current research literature on bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.</p> <p>Some school personnel will recognize that they need more resources to intensify bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.</p>
Research Question 4	<p>School personnel will utilize some systematic Tier 2/3 interventions to support SWD involved in bullying. These interventions will be evidence based and will address the risk factors associated with the overrepresentation of SWD in the bullying dynamic (e.g., poor social skills, low peer support, and difficulty reading social cues).</p> <p>School personnel will utilize data to differentiate and intensify bullying prevention and intervention for SWD across the different tiers.</p> <p>School personnel will collaborate effectively to intensify bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.</p>

*Note.* PBIS = positive behavioral interventions and supports; SWD = students with disabilities

## Setting

In qualitative inquiry, a researcher purposefully selects a site that aids him or her in understanding a complex problem (Creswell, 2009). Because bullying peaks in early adolescence (Pellegrini & Long, 2002), a middle school provides an ideal setting for a case study of bullying prevention and intervention for SWD. After obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A), I utilized a systematic approach to identify a middle school that demonstrated a high level of success with implementation of PBIS. The Midwest PBIS Network ([www.midwestpbis.org](http://www.midwestpbis.org)), an educational organization at the School Association for Special Education in DuPage County (SASED) provides PBIS training and technical support in school districts throughout the Midwest. Schools that have implemented PBIS effectively may apply annually to the Midwest PBIS Network to be recognized for their efforts. Based on the Midwest PBIS Network criteria, schools may receive bronze, silver, gold, or platinum recognition. The key component involved in each level of recognition is that schools need to assess the fidelity of PBIS implementation using the SWPBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI). This assessment tool allows schools to determine the extent to which they have implemented the core features of SWPBIS (Algozzine et al., 2014). Additionally, schools need to report the percentage of students receiving ODRs, out-of-school suspensions, Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, and student overall progress. The Midwest PBIS Network provided on its website a list of all schools that were recognized in spring 2016 (the school year preceding this case study). A total of 490 schools received bronze, silver, gold, or platinum recognition. Middle schools comprised 16.7% of these 490 schools. Gold recognition was awarded to 15.9% of the middle schools, while 3.7% of the middle schools received platinum recognition.

I developed guidelines (see Appendix B) to identify a middle school that would be the optimal setting for this case study. First, I aimed to select a middle school that had received either platinum or gold recognition according to the Midwest PBIS Network criteria for receiving the gold and platinum recognition (see Appendix C), suggesting that these middle schools likely have a high level of commitment to implementing the PBIS framework. In addition, I intended to find a middle school that has adopted a school-wide bullying prevention program as part of Tier 1 primary prevention. Furthermore, the selected middle school needed to provide a continuum of services for SWD, including general education with inclusion, resource settings, and self-contained classrooms. It was also important to consider selecting a middle school with a longer history of PBIS implementation, as school personnel in such school would have likely received more training with respect to the multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention.

Throughout the online screening process (e.g., visiting the school websites), I also consulted with the Midwest PBIS Network to find the optimal setting for this case study. I contacted via email administrators from three middle schools that had received platinum recognition; however, they either denied my request or did not respond to my initial inquiry. I then decided to focus on a middle school with gold recognition. With some assistance from the Midwest PBIS Network, I contacted a middle school in a suburban school district located outside a large Midwestern city, which met the criteria to be a setting for this case study. Subsequently, the principal provided permission to conduct research in his school in spring 2017. To ensure the participants' confidentiality, I will refer to this middle school as Homestead School.

Homestead School had a population of over 600 students and served Grades 6-8. A review of the yearly At-a-Glance Report Card published by the state Department of Education

indicated that the student body was racially and ethnically diverse (see Table 6). English Learners included less than 10% of the population and students with low socio-economic status represented one-third of the student body. Additionally, youth with disabilities were diverse racially/ethnically and the majority of them had high-incidence disabilities (see Table 7).

Table 6

*Student Demographic Information*

Demographics	Percentage/Number
Overall Enrollment	640-650
Racial/Ethnic Diversity	42% White 24% Asian 23% Hispanic 7% African-American 4% Others
Low Income	35%
English Learners	7%
Homeless	1%
Student Attendance	95%
Student Mobility	5%
Chronically Truant Students	0%

Table 7

*Students with Disabilities Demographic Information*

Demographics	Percentage/Number
Overall Enrollment	14%
Racial/Ethnic Diversity	40% White 24% Hispanic 16% African-American 15% Asian 5% Two or More
Different Disabilities	40% SLD 18% Autism 14% OHI 9% SLI 8% ID 7% EBD 3% HI

*Note.* SLD = specific learning disability; OHI = other health impairments; ID = intellectual disability; EBD = emotional behavioral disability; HI = hearing impairment

**Recruitment**

The process of participant recruitment began with placing a recruitment flyer (see Appendix D) in mailboxes of all school personnel at Homestead. In addition to providing an overview of the study, the flyer included the date and time when I was scheduled to attend a staff meeting. In the flyer I also encouraged school personnel to contact me directly to receive more information if they were interested in participating in the study but were not able to attend the staff meeting. At the staff meeting, I went through the recruitment script (see Appendix E) with those present. I answered any questions and provided the school personnel with the participant informed consent forms (see Appendices F-I).

School personnel interested in participating in this research were given approximately 1 week to sign and return the participant informed consent form in an agreed-upon location in the school office. Additionally, I placed a reminder (see Appendix J) in mailboxes of all school personnel 2 days before returning to the school to collect any signed participant informed consent forms. Prospective subjects who might have had more questions about the research were encouraged to contact me via email or phone to schedule a time to meet in person. I recorded each contact with the prospective subjects in a recruitment log (see Appendix K). My aim was to recruit approximately 18 school personnel; however, the number of returned consent forms following the recruitment at the staff meeting was relatively low, and I used publicly available contact information (e.g., faculty directory available on the school website) to seek more volunteers. I sent an email message (see Appendix L) to certified school personnel to remind them of the study and encourage them to volunteer, and this generated a greater response.

Within a week of receiving the signed participant informed consent forms, I used publicly available contact information (e.g., faculty directory available on the school website) and contacted each prospective subject via email to enroll them in the study (see Appendix M). During the enrollment meeting, I assigned each prospective subject a random pseudonym. I recorded all enrollment information (i.e., participant first and last name, assigned pseudonym, and email and phone contact information) in the enrollment log (see Appendix O).

Once the participants were enrolled in the study, they were asked to complete a participant background information form (see Appendix P) which included each participant's age, gender, racial and linguistic background, years of teaching experience, years of employment at the current middle school, and a description of his/her teaching assignment (e.g., subject and grade level and educational setting). This background information about each prospective

participant enabled me to: (a) verify their eligibility to participate in the study, (b) recruit school personnel with diverse experiences and perspectives on bullying prevention and intervention, and (c) describe the subjects' demographic information in this study. Furthermore, at the end of the enrollment meeting, I scheduled two interviews with each participant and discussed the timeline for obtaining specific documents and/or physical artifacts. If upon reviewing the participant background information form, I determined that an individual did not meet the eligibility criteria to participate in the study (e.g., teaches only low-incidence students), I informed that individual as soon as possible about his or her exclusion from the study.

### **Participants**

To examine the nuances of how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying in the middle school within a multi-tiered framework, it was important to incorporate perspectives from multiple stakeholders. Thus, participants in this study included school personnel who supported SWD directly through teaching, indirectly through consultation and collaboration, or as administrators. General education teachers were eligible to participate in this study if (a) they taught core subjects such as Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Language, Physical Education, Art, or Music, and (b) they had students with high-incidence disabilities included in their classes during the 2016-17 school year. General education teachers who functioned in roles of reading specialists, literacy coaches/interventionists, technology coaches, or taught solely EL students were excluded, as they typically provide supplemental instruction and/or teach smaller targeted groups of students.

Additionally, this study included special education teachers who taught or co-taught students with high-incidence disabilities in general education settings, resource settings, or self-contained classrooms. Furthermore, related services personnel, including social workers, speech

and language pathologists, and school psychologists, were invited to participate in this study if they (a) provided direct services (e.g., weekly groups or individual sessions) to students with high-incidence disabilities or (b) consulted and collaborated with other team members regarding students with high-incidence disabilities. This study also involved participants who were school administrators such as assistant principals and principal, who (a) were responsible for responding to bullying incidents and/or (b) led or participated in PBIS committees. Finally, I aimed to include in this study a PBIS coach/leader who leads or participates in PBIS meetings. Having multiple participants per each unit of analysis, I was able to establish converging lines of inquiry and data triangulation. The final sample of participants included 18 certified school personnel, and Table 8 describes their demographic information.

Table 8

*Characteristics of the Participants*

Descriptive Variable	Data
Gender	78% Female 22% Male
Age	Range: 23-59 years old Average: 41 years old
Race	94% White 6% African-American
Highest Degree Earned	22% Bachelor's 78% Master's
Total Years of Teaching Experience	Range: 2-27 years Average: 14 years 22% with fewer than 5 years 78% with 5 years or more
Years at Homestead	Range: 1-25 years Average: 9 years 56% with 1-4 years 44% with 5 years or more
Roles at Homestead	33% general education teachers 28% special education teachers 17% related services personnel 17% school administrators 5% PBIS coach <sup>1</sup>
High-Functioning Disabilities Participants Worked with/Supported in 2016-17	LD = 94% of participants ADHD = 89% of participants EBD = 83% of participants SLI = 61% of participants HF-Autism = of 61% participants Mild ID = 39% of participants

*Note:* LD = learning disability; ADHD = attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; EBD = emotional behavioral disability; SLI = speech and language impairment; HF-Autism = high-functioning Autism; ID = intellectual disability;

<sup>a</sup> This included one certified staff member who was a district PBIS coach; however, there were three participants who, in addition to their main roles, were also PBIS building coaches during the 2016-17 school year.

The majority of the recruited school personnel were females. The participants' ages ranged from 23 to 59 years, and most of them were White. More than three-fourths of the recruited school personnel had Master's degrees. On average, the participants had worked at Homestead School in their current roles for 9 years. As a unit of analysis, general educators comprised 33% of all participants, and there were two teachers per each grade level. Five of the 18 participants (28%) were special educators and they supported youth with disabilities across Grades 6-8 and in various educational settings (e.g., co-taught, pull-out resource, and self-contained). Furthermore, as a unit of analysis, related services personnel comprised 17% of all participants, which included two social workers and a school psychologist. Similarly, 17% of the participants included Homestead administrators, which consisted of two assistant principals and a school principal. Importantly, one of the key participants was a district PBIS coach, housed at Homestead School, who had a leadership position with respect to PBIS implementation and bullying prevention efforts. Additionally, aside from their main roles at Homestead School, three of the participants had functioned as PBIS building coaches during the 2016-17 school year. Thus, one of the special educators was a PBIS Tier 1 coach, one of the eighth-grade general educators was a Tier 2 coach, and one of the social workers was a Tier 3 coach.

### **Sources of Evidence**

A case study researcher makes inferences about the case study, which must be based on the convergent evidence from multiple sources (Yin, 2014). Since bullying is a context-rich phenomenon, utilizing multiple sources of evidence and obtaining perspectives from several key informants was paramount to understanding how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying of students with high-incidence disabilities, specifically in the middle school that

successfully implemented a multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention. Therefore, to answer each research question, I obtained data using different methods and elicited perspectives from multiple school personnel. Table 9 presents information about data collection procedures related to each source of evidence, which will be discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

Table 9

*Sources of Data*

<b>Sources of Data</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS</b> Two face-to-face interviews with each participant	-To examine the context of the PBIS framework and impact on the implementation of bullying prevention and intervention, specifically for SWD -To examine how school personnel define and respond to bullying of SWD -To examine any similarities and differences in how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying, specifically of SWD. -To examine how school personnel individualize/intensify bullying interventions for SWD (hypothetical cases)
<b>DOCUMENTS</b> Teacher/staff and student satisfaction surveys ODR reports August 2016-June 2017 Anti-bullying policy	-To examine the context of the PBIS framework and impact on the implementation of bullying prevention and intervention, specifically for SWD  -To examine how school personnel define and respond to bullying of SWD
<b>PHYSICAL ARTIFACTS</b> Behavior matrix Classroom posters of expected behaviors ODR blank form	-To examine the context of the PBIS framework and impact on the implementation of bullying prevention and intervention, specifically for SWD
Tier 2 SAIG's description and the entrance/exit criteria Tier 2 teacher referral form & self-referral form	-To examine the context of the PBIS framework and impact on the implementation of bullying prevention and intervention, specifically for SWD -To examine how school personnel individualize/intensify bullying interventions for SWD
Artifacts of classroom bullying prevention activities	-To examine any similarities and differences in how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying, specifically of SWD. -To examine how school personnel individualize/intensify bullying interventions for SWD

*Note.* SWD = students with disabilities; PBIS = positive behavioral intervention & supports; SAIG = social/academic instructional groups; ODR = office discipline referral

**Interviews.** For a case study researcher, interviews are one of the most valuable sources of evidence. They are instruments for guided conversations with participants to obtain corroboratory or contrary evidence or to capture each participant's own sense of reality (Yin, 2014). Because multiple school personnel support SWD, I conducted two semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the participants who were directly or indirectly involved in bullying prevention and/or intervention efforts for SWD. These key informants included a combination of general education teachers, special education teachers, related services personnel, and school administrators. Throughout the interviews, I encouraged the participants to reflect on how their approaches to bullying prevention and intervention of SWD may or may not differ from the approaches they tended to utilize with youth without disabilities.

The first interview protocol was composed of questions drawn from a small-scale qualitative study I had conducted in one of my doctoral program courses to explore the knowledge of newly certified special education teachers regarding bullying prevention and intervention (see Appendix Q). Additionally, I used existing literature on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, risk and protective factors, to design three hypothetical cases involving SWD, which were included in the second interview protocol (see Appendices R-S). Prior to finalizing the interview protocols, I shared the questions and the hypothetical student cases with a group of educators (i.e., special education teachers, general education teachers, social worker, speech and language pathologist, and principal) to obtain their feedback. This led to further revisions of the interview protocols to ensure the clarity of questions.

The first interview focused on exploring each participant's experiences with bullying and their understanding of the multi-tiered system of bullying prevention and intervention for all students and, specifically, for youth with disabilities. Each participant was asked the same

questions to explore potential similarities and differences in their awareness of bullying, their responses to bullying when a student with or without disability is involved, and the use of different components of bullying prevention and intervention.

During the second interview, I posed specific questions about the three hypothetical SWD to further explore the nuances of each participant's approach to bullying prevention and intervention. These hypothetical cases were adolescents with high-incidence disabilities and some key bullying risk factors (e.g., poor social skills, low peer support, and difficulty reading social cues) and who experienced or engaged in different forms of bullying. I asked open-ended questions to gain insight into each participant's potential response on the spot to bullying if they encountered a similar situation to the one described in the hypothetical case. I also inquired about specific elements of bullying prevention and intervention the participants would likely utilize to intervene with bullying of the hypothetical student. I asked all the participants the same questions in an effort to illuminate potential similarities and differences in how the different school personnel may approach bullying prevention and intervention involving youth with different high-incidence disabilities.

The second interview conducted with the PBIS coach differed from the others (see Appendix T), as it included a discussion about various documents and physical artifacts related to school climate, bullying measurement, school-wide expected behaviors, and tiered interventions to gain a deeper understanding of how bullying prevention and intervention efforts are integrated within the multi-tiered framework at Homestead School.

Collectively, these interviews provided evidence for how different school personnel tended to respond to bullying incidents involving SWD, what bullying prevention and intervention practices they were likely to utilize, and the extent to which bullying prevention and

interventions were individualized for SWD. By interviewing multiple school personnel with distinct roles, I was able to gain insight into how they enact their roles with respect to bullying prevention and intervention.

**Documentation.** I used several types of documents to corroborate and strengthen evidence from other sources. First, I obtained documentary evidence related to the whole-school system to better understand the context of bullying prevention and intervention for SWD. The school anti-bullying policy was an essential source of evidence containing a definition of bullying and its various forms as well as the procedures and protocols that school personnel are required to follow to prevent bullying and to respond on the spot to bullying incidents.

Additionally, I obtained teacher/staff and student satisfaction survey reports with results from the school-wide assessment of school climate and bullying at Homestead School. These surveys were completed in December 2016. I also obtained ODR reports generated from the School-Wide Information System (SWIS). By reviewing results from the broad school-wide assessments and specific ongoing behavior data collection, I was able to gain deeper insight into the school context surrounding SWD and corroborate this evidence with information obtained from other sources.

**Physical Artifacts.** I collected some physical evidence in an effort to further corroborate data about how the context of a multi-tiered framework in middle school affects the implementation of different bullying prevention and intervention elements for SWD. This included a visual matrix of school-wide behavioral expectations displayed in different areas of the school. In PBIS schools, a matrix of expected behaviors serves as a tool to reinforce school-wide rules and expectations and establish positive school climate.

I also obtained an ODR form that school personnel utilized to collect data on problem behaviors. I identified those behaviors that were characterized as “major” and “minor” problem behaviors and the different disciplinary actions that school personnel could consider while responding to the problem behaviors. Since these referral forms were used to collect school-wide behavioral data that PBIS team members were expected to analyze to determine students’ needs for tiered interventions, it was important to discern whether there was a clear link between these “major” and “minor” problem behaviors and different forms of bullying behaviors.

Moreover, I collected physical artifacts to further examine how school personnel tended to individualize and intensify bullying prevention and intervention for SWD. This included a listing of social/academic instructional groups (SAIG) available at Tier 2 with the entrance/exit criteria to determine whether Tier 2 interventions include any components of bullying prevention and intervention. I also obtained pictures of posters with school-wide expected behaviors displayed in the classrooms of the participating general and special education teachers.

Finally, I asked participating general education and special education teachers to share an artifact representing a bullying prevention or intervention activity they had implemented in their classrooms during the 2016-17 school year. This could have included a class activity, student reflection sheet, social story, reward chart, or behavior contract, any of which aimed to promote anti-bullying attitudes or to intervene with bullying behaviors. These physical artifacts illuminated bullying prevention and intervention practices implemented at the classroom level.

**Field Notes.** Gaining a deep understanding of the context within which the school personnel enacted bullying prevention and intervention for SWD was paramount to this study to identify salient features of the multi-tiered framework that may significantly affect bullying prevention and intervention for youth with high-incidence disabilities. As part of the ongoing

data collection, I consistently wrote field notes that play an important role in case studies (Yin, 2014). This included handwritten jottings created during fieldwork that consisted of brief descriptions of observed patterns, emerging questions, and insights. As recommended by Yin (2014), I converted these brief jottings into memos revolving around the emerging hunches and themes, and subsequently, they provided additional evidence for converging lines of inquiry during data analysis.

## **Procedures**

By examining multiple sources of evidence, including interviews, documentation, physical artifacts, and field notes, I aimed to triangulate the information and establish converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2014). To ensure appropriate data management during data collection and analysis and to increase the study reliability, I established an electronic case study database available for later retrieval and inspection (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Yin, 2014). This database contained transcribed interviews, scanned copies of all documents, photocopies of physical artifacts, and field notes. I followed explicit procedures to organize and prepare the data for analysis.

**Interviews.** I conducted two face-to-face interviews with each participant. These interviews were scheduled at each participant's preferred time and location. This included before school, during school, after school, or during non-school hours at the participant's preferred private location. The length of interviews ranged from 17 to 54 min with the average duration of 28 min. I recorded a total of 18 hours of interviews with the different school personnel. I utilized the interview protocols (see Appendices Q-T) to guide my conversations with the participants. I also used clarifying probes to encourage them to explain their ideas more explicitly and elaborating probes if they needed to expand on ideas (e.g., "Tell me more. Could

you explain your response more? I need more detail. What does \_\_\_\_ mean?” Creswell, 2012). In addition to audio recording each interview, I took brief notes on the interview protocol. Each interview was professionally transcribed. I checked the accuracy of 20% of transcriptions by listening to the corresponding audio recordings and identifying and correcting any errors. The accuracy rate of the reviewed transcripts was 95-100%. Additionally, I utilized a member checking procedure to increase the accuracy of each interviewee’s account (Creswell, 2009). Thus, each participant received a copy of the transcription and was allowed to edit his or her responses.

**Documentation.** I obtained documentation pertaining to the whole-school system, including a copy of the school anti-bullying policy and results from teacher/staff and student satisfaction surveys describing school climate and bullying at Homestead and yearly ODR reports. I examined the school website where I located a copy of the anti-bullying policy embedded in the student handbook. All these documents were scanned, uploaded, and saved in the case study database. Information about when and how each of the documents was obtained was recorded in the data collection log (see Appendix U).

**Physical Artifacts.** I collected physical artifacts specifically related to the PBIS framework from the participants who were school administrators or PBIS coaches. This included a visual matrix of expected behaviors, ODR form, Tier 2 SAIG’s description and the entrance/exit criteria, and Tier 2 teacher- and self-referral forms. Additionally, I obtained pictures of classroom posters with expected behaviors when conducting interviews with general and special education teachers. These physical artifacts were all school-created visuals and I removed the school mascot before scanning, uploading, and saving these physical artifacts in the case study database.

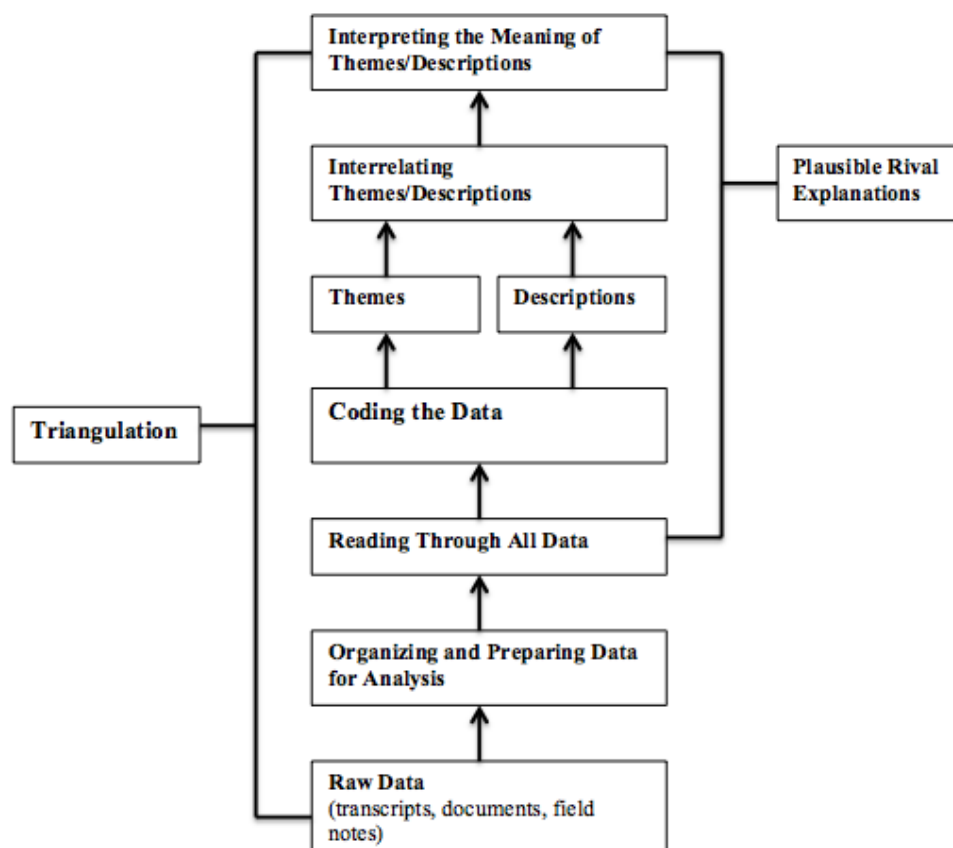
Furthermore, I asked the participating general and special education teachers to make copies of the artifacts representing bullying prevention and intervention activities implemented at the classroom level and to bring them to the second interview. As stated in the protocol for the second interview (see Appendix R), I asked general and special education teachers about (a) the purpose of the activity, (b) how he or she incorporated this activity into instruction, (c) how the activity was connected to bullying prevention and intervention, (d) whether SWD were included in this activity, and (e) how SWD responded to this activity.

All physical artifacts were scanned, uploaded, and saved in the case study database. I recorded the information about when and how I obtained each of them in the data collection log (see Appendix U). I closely reviewed all physical artifacts for evidence demonstrating the impact of the PBIS framework on the implementation of bullying prevention and intervention, specifically for SWD. I aimed to identify any similarities and differences in how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying, specifically of SWD, and to examine how school personnel individualize/intensify bullying interventions for SWD.

### **Data Analysis Strategies and Techniques**

Ongoing reflection, asking critical questions about the data, and iterative analysis characterizes qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). While re-reading the transcribed interviews, scanned documents, physical artifacts, and field notes, I engaged in a coding process. This included segmenting sentences or paragraphs with similar data into chunks and labeling them with a word or short phrase referred to as a code (Creswell, 2009; Miles et al., 2014). These codes captured the essence of the condensed portion of text or visual data (Saldaña, 2013). Integral to the coding process was reading through all data multiple times to gain a general picture of the obtained information and its meaning (Creswell, 2009). While “playing with the

data,” I worked the data from the “ground up” to identify first the emerging codes and then themes in an inductive and iterative manner (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014; see Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* Data analysis in qualitative research. Adapted from “Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches,” by J. W. Creswell, 2009, p. 185. Copyright 2009 by SAGE Publications, Inc.

My general analytic strategy was coding and categorizing data, which was an iterative process. As recommended by Saldaña (2013), the data analysis included two major cycles of coding. During “First Cycle” coding, some codes were pre-determined based on the research questions, while others emerged from the data. I operationally defined all individual codes that

surfaced during “First Cycle” coding to ensure the accuracy of evidence and then assigned them the chunks of similar data. Table 10 presents several coding methods that I utilized during “First Cycle” coding (Miles et al., 2014).

Table 10

*First Cycle Coding Methods (Miles et al., 2014)*

Coding Method	Description
Descriptive Coding	A descriptive code includes a word (e.g., noun) or phrase that summarizes a segment of text or visual data (e.g., SCHOOL CLIMATE)
In Vivo Coding	An In Vivo code includes a word or short phrase stated by the participant, which is placed in quotation marks (e.g., “REFERRED TO THE PRINCIPAL”).
Process Coding	A process code uses gerunds (words ending with “ing”) to capture some observable or implied action and process found in the data (e.g., CONSULTING WITH A SOCIAL WORKER).
Evaluation Coding	Evaluation coding assigns judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy (e.g., MOST EFFECTIVE).
Values Coding	A values code depicts the participant’s attitudes (e.g., A: SHARED RESPONSIBILITY), beliefs (e.g., B: INCLUSION), and values (e.g., V: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP)

To ensure reliability, I conducted code-checking during “First Cycle” coding. I shared operationally defined codes and examples of coded interviews with a secondary coder. We then separately coded 25% of the interviews to verify whether we were assigning the same codes to similar blocks of data. While comparing side-by-side the separately coded interviews, I incorporated the simultaneous coding method which, in some instances, allowed for the

application of two or more different codes to the same blocks of data (Miles et al., 2014).

Subsequently, the intercoder agreement with respect to assigning the same codes to the same or similar blocks of data ranged from 85 to 90% per interview. Overall, the process of code-checking resulted in a coding scheme that included 26 codes with operational definitions and specific examples of data chunks representing each code (see Appendix V).

Results from the “First Cycle” coding were condensed during the “Second Cycle” coding to determine fewer broader themes and concepts (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2013). I utilized Pattern Coding as the primary method of data analysis during the “Second Cycle” coding. Pattern Codes are explanatory and inferential codes that may signal an emerging category or theme, causes/explanations, relationships among people, or theoretical constructs (Miles et al., 2014). I assembled similar codes and fragments of text from the “First Cycle” coding and assigned a Pattern Code based on their shared commonality (Saldaña, 2013).

Furthermore, in order to find Pattern Codes during the “Second Cycle,” I moved chunks of data identified in the “First Cycle” into a large visual matrix organized around each of the four research questions and the four types of school personnel (units of analysis), including general education teachers, special education teachers, related services providers, and school administrators to reveal potential similarities and differences within and across these groups and to illuminate the main themes pertaining to the case. I was “playing with my data” and manipulating it by juxtaposing bits of data to search for promising patterns, re-examining, re-categorizing and recombining codes to form patterns (Yin, 2014). To detect the main themes, I displayed the data in different ways. Overall, I completed three iterations of the visual matrix to condense the data and find summarizers of repeated behaviors, actions, and routines within and across the four groups of educators. As an example, Figure 4 shows a small segment of data

obtained from one of the general education teachers focusing on responding to reports of bullying.

Unit of Analysis	How do they respond to incidents of reported or observed bullying (general protocol)?	Is the protocol for responding to bullying incidents involving SWD similar or different?
Abby (Gr. 7) General Education Teacher	<p>Administration takes bullying reports very seriously. She referred one of her students to the office because he was engaging in disrespectful behavior repeatedly (putting hands down on students, put downs), <i>"During that time, admin will conference with them and help them understand why you can't do that. It's not just they're sitting in a room, but really letting them know that this is serious and it needs to be stopped"</i> (Abby Interview 2).</p> <p>This is how she responds: <i>Kind of like I was mentioning with Expect Respect: I always thank the student for letting me know and let them know that the way that they were treated was not okay. Thank them for coming to me and trusting me with that and then I let them know that I will be following up with whatever the situation might be. I typically try to do it later, so it's not like, "Oh, so-and-so came up and then now I'm going straight over here cuz I don't want them to be bullied further"</i> (Abby Interview 1).</p>	<p>She would use the SWAT and validate the student's decision to report bullying, <i>"I mean we try to encourage the kids to tell an adult. The way that we are supposed to respond, then, is to say—make sure we let them know, like, "Thank you for telling us. Thank you for sharing this with us," so that they feel validated in their decision to do that. The teacher then can go intervene with the student who is bullying and keep an eye on the situation and make sure that it stops, just to get that student who feels as though they're being bullied the reassurance that it'll end.</i> (Abby Interview 1)</p> <p>Her response to bullying of SWD and peers without disabilities is the same.</p>

Figure 4. Example from the “Second Cycle” coding: 1st iteration of the visual matrix.

During the second iteration of the visual matrix, I rearranged the data by displaying the participants’ perspectives one next to another within each unit of analysis. As an example, Figure 5 below shows data focusing on responding to reports of bullying obtained from all six general educators.

Unit of Analysis	RESPONDING TO BULLYING INVOLVING SWD					
	Is their protocol for responding to bullying incidents involving SWD similar or different from their approach to peers without disabilities?					
General Education Teachers	Jamie (Gr. 6)	Kathy (Gr. 6)	Abby (Gr. 7)	Maria (Gr. 7)	Evelyn (Gr. 8)	Robert (Gr. 8)
	Generally the same response to SWD and peers without disabilities, but they have to consider whether bullying is part of SWD's disability.	School personnel tries to be fair and take into account the student's disability.		Her response is either the same or similar for students with and without disabilities; however, SWD have usually "a few more advocates."	directly, but also involve a social worker so that they can problem solve together during their sessions.	
	SWD may need more explanation from an adult and teaching the expected behaviors.	She would react more strongly because targeting students with different abilities is wrong. Her response would be more black-white. She would send a clear message to a general education student that bullying SWD is wrong.	Uses the SWAT and validates the student's decision to report bullying.	A resource teacher might know SWD well and have a close relationship and be able to come up with a plan on how to deal with bullying or feelings related to bullying.	Sometimes the school administrators get involved and talk with the students if they have a good relationship with them.	Is more explicit and careful while gathering information.
	Adults need to be more patient.	Talk to a case manager/special education teacher.	Intervenes with the student who is bullying and monitors the situation to make sure that it stops.	SWD might also have closer relationships with social workers who might get involved.	Lets the student know that this behavior is unacceptable.	Contacts parents more promptly.
			Her response to bullying involving SWD and peers without disabilities is the same.		Overall, her response to SWD is mostly the	Involves the resource teacher.
						Tries to treat everyone equally and not draw attention to anyone.

Figure 5. Example from the "Second Cycle" coding: 2nd iteration of the visual matrix.

Importantly, I developed guidelines for establishing Pattern Codes in the data displayed in the visual matrix. Firstly, I identified a pattern within each group of school personnel (unit of analysis) if there appeared to be an agreement among at least half of the participants comprising the specific group (e.g., a statement, question, or concern resonated with at least three out of six general education teachers). I then examined the visual matrix to find agreements across multiple groups of school personnel (units of analysis). As an example, Figure 6 shows the third iteration of the visual matrix displaying how the different groups of school personnel tended to respond to bullying of SWD. A pattern was detected when it resonated with at least two of the four groups of school personnel (e.g., both general educators and special educators shared a similar experience or concern). This iterative approach allowed for the main themes to emerge within and across the different units of analysis.

	<b>General Education Teachers</b>	<b>Special Education Teachers</b>	<b>Related Services</b>	<b>School Administrators</b>
<b>General Response to Bullying</b>	<p>Talk to the students involved usually separately to gather information and establish facts and check their perception of the incident</p> <p>Involve a grade level social worker who will talk to the victim and bully and help them process what happened.</p> <p>Report/involve the school administrators in more serious incidents</p>	<p>Talk to the students involved usually separately to gather information and establish facts and check their perception of the incident</p> <p>Complete an ODR for more serious issues or if witnessed personally the incident.</p> <p>Report this to the school administrators for a further follow-up (e.g., determine consequences)</p>	<p>Talk to the students involved usually separately to gather information and establish facts and check their perception of the incident</p> <p>Report it to school administrators</p>	<p>Talk to the students involved usually separately to gather information and establish facts and check their perception of the incident</p> <p>Involve a grade level social worker or another school administrator</p> <p>Document the incident (in SWIS and in the principal's notes)</p> <p>Communicate/involve parents/family</p>
<b>Responding to Bullying of SWD</b>	<p>Generally the same or similar response for both peers without disabilities and SWD</p> <p>They are more patient, careful, and explicit while gathering information from SWD</p> <p>Involve a resource teacher/case manager who might have a closer relationship with SWD</p>	<p>Generally the same or similar response for both peers without disabilities and SWD</p> <p>When SWD are victims of bullying, special education teachers feel particularly protective (e.g., feel motherly, take it to heart), and serious (e.g., it angers them) because SWD are more vulnerable.</p>	<p>Generally the same or similar response for both peers without disabilities and SWD.</p>	<p>Generally the same or similar response for both peers without disabilities and SWD.</p> <p><i>*They each then described some additional steps they would consider taking.</i></p>

Figure 6. Example from the “Second Cycle” coding: 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration of the visual matrix.

While I was combining and categorizing the data to determine Pattern Codes, I, simultaneously, paid close attention to the theoretical propositions that guided the case study analysis (Yin, 2014). Once main themes were identified for each group of school personnel and the overall case, I employed a pattern-matching logic, one of the most common analytic techniques in case study research (Yin, 2014). This involved comparing and contrasting the study findings with the theoretical propositions determined prior to data collection (see Appendix W). By examining the extent to which the findings aligned with the predicted patterns, I was able to strengthen the study’s internal validity (Yin, 2014).

### Validity and Reliability

During data collection and data analysis, I employed several different techniques to ensure the construct validity of the study. Data from multiple sources of evidence and multiple

perspectives were triangulated to establish converging lines of inquiry (Creswell, 2009). By using rich and thick description to convey the results from this study (see Chapter 4), I further increased the qualitative validity of the study (Creswell, 2009; Miles et al., 2014). Additionally, I utilized a second round of member checking at the end of my data analysis to verify the accuracy of the main themes and their interpretation. All participants had the opportunity to review the main themes and comment on the case study findings (Creswell, 2009).

Similarly, I employed several procedures to increase reliability of the findings. I paid close attention to any shifts in the definitions of codes during both first and second cycles of the coding process (Creswell, 2009). While continually comparing the data against the codes, I wrote analytic memos to document explicitly my thinking process about the code definitions and the emerging themes (Miles et al., 2014). In fact, I wrote several different types of memos throughout the different phases of my iterative data analysis. I produced memos about interviews, documents, physical artifacts, as well as the research questions and theoretical propositions, which, in addition to documenting my thinking process, allowed for refining, defending, and refuting the emerging themes.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, a secondary coder who completed IRB training coded 25% of the interview transcriptions to verify agreement on using the same codes for the same passages of text and our intercoder agreement ranged from 85-90% per interview.

Additionally, throughout the course of the study, I maintained detailed logs of chronological data collection (see Appendix U) and data analysis logs (see Appendix X) to track the completion of specific steps and to document where the specific data components were saved in the study database for later retrieval (Creswell, 2009; Miles et al., 2014).

## IV. RESULTS

This chapter describes bullying prevention and intervention for SWD embedded within a multi-tiered framework at Homestead School. I present the results in four main sections aligned with each respective research question. I aimed to address the following research questions in this case study:

1. How does the context of a multi-tiered framework in the middle school affect the implementation of different bullying prevention and intervention elements for SWD?
2. How do different school personnel respond to incidents of bullying perpetration and/or victimization of SWD in the middle school within a multi-tiered framework?
3. What are the similarities and differences within and across school personnel with respect to various bullying prevention and intervention elements utilized as part of their roles within a multi-tiered framework?
4. How do different school personnel intensify prevention and intervention for SWD in the middle school within a multi-tiered framework?

Within each section, I will present perspectives of four different groups of school personnel (units of analysis), including general education teachers, special education teachers, related services personnel, and school administrators and determine main themes within and across these participants. Findings from interviews have been corroborated by using a review of various documents and physical artifacts obtained from the school personnel. Each unit of analysis (i.e., general education teachers, special education teachers, related services personnel, and school administrators) included three-six school personnel who varied in the grade levels they supported and in their roles in the school. To protect the identity of individual school personnel, I will discuss findings representative of each group of school personnel. I will highlight differences I

identified within and across the four units of analysis to broaden the scope of the various experiences Homestead School personnel may have had with respect to bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.

### **Research Question One. The Multi-Tiered Framework and its Effect on Bullying Prevention and Intervention for SWD**

Bullying prevention and intervention efforts at Homestead School are intended to be integrated within PBIS. In this section, I draw on findings from various documents and physical artifacts as well as interviews to describe the context of the multi-tiered framework at Homestead within which bullying prevention and intervention are embedded.

#### **The Multi-Tiered Framework at Homestead School**

Homestead School is one of the nine schools in a school district that has implemented the PBIS framework. The multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) at Homestead School is presented in Table 11. The key component of the PBIS framework at Homestead is universal teaching and positively reinforcing school-wide prosocial behaviors such as (a) Be Respectful, (b) Be Responsible, and (c) Be Proud. Figure 7 presents the Behavior Matrix developed by the school personnel. This matrix provides specific examples of what each of these expected behaviors may look like in various areas of the school and is displayed throughout the school. Figure 8 shows classroom posters of these expected behaviors.

Table 11

*Multi-Tiered Framework at Homestead School*

Type of Intervention	Criteria	Purpose & Characteristics
School-Wide Expected Behaviors Cool Tools	Tier 1 All Students	Cool Tools include lesson plans used to teach and re-teach explicitly the school-wide expected behaviors: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Proud. All students are taught these school-wide behaviors at the start of the year and are retaught during advisory on an as-needed basis. The Tier 1 Team may recommend re-teaching certain behaviors based on the review of ODR data.
Contingent & Specific Positive Reinforcement with gotcha tickets	Tier 1 All Students	All staff members are encouraged to acknowledge and reinforce the school-wide expected behaviors when students demonstrate these behaviors by giving them gotcha tickets which students redeem for prizes during PBIS Redemption Days that occur usually on a monthly basis.
Check In Check Out (CICO)	Tier 2 <u>Entrance Criteria</u> Three or more ODRs within a month Teacher Referral Parent Referral Student Self-Referral  <u>Exit Criteria</u> 80% of possible daily points in 20 days out of the month	CICO fosters positive student-teacher relationship. A student is paired with a coach and expected to check in and check out with his/her coach before and after school each day. The student is also expected to check in with each teacher at the end of each class period. The coach reviews the expected behaviors, a student's goal, and provides the student with feedback on his/her behavior. Students receive incentives (i.e., daily points) for meeting their goals.
Social Academic Instructional Groups (SAIG)	Tier 2 SAIG may be added as another layer when students are not responding to CICO.	Each SAIG comprises four-six students who meet one-two times per week for the duration of 6-8 weeks. During the 2016-17 school year, there were the following SAIGs: 1. Problem Solving Skills group: targeted skills may include understanding, expressing, and managing emotions appropriately, self-control, listening, respectful communication, giving and receiving help, and working cooperatively and fairly in groups.

Type of Intervention	Criteria	Purpose & Characteristics
		<p>2. Emotional Management Skills Group: targeted skills may include identifying, understanding, and managing feelings, managing anger, dealing with accusation and fights, and identifying coping skills (e.g., how to make yourself feel better).</p> <p>3. Classroom Survival Skills Group: targeted skills may include staying focused in class and ignoring distractions, putting forth effort when tasks are hard, following directions, organizational skills, self-advocating, listening, asking for help, and following instructions.</p> <p>Each SAIG has typically two facilitators (e.g., related services providers and general education teachers). The curriculum is reviewed and approved by the district committee. During the 2016-17 school year, Homestead School was using the SAIG curriculum developed by Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee, WI.</p>
Brief FBA-BIP	<p>Tier 2.5</p> <p>A brief FBA-BIP may be developed when students are not responding to CICO and/or SAIG.</p>	The Tier 2 Team makes a recommendation to develop an informal BIP that includes more specific behavioral strategies (slow/fast triggers, reinforcers).

*Note.* CICO = Check In Check Out; SAIG = social academic intervention groups; ODR = office discipline referral; FBA = functional behavior assessment; BIP = behavioral intervention plan

Hallways	Cafeteria	Classrooms	Bus	Locker Room	Bathroom	Assemblies Games	LLC
Walk to the right	Be courteous to cafeteria supervisors	Keep hands and feet to yourself	Obey the driver	Listen and follow adult directions	Respect others' privacy	Follow adult directions	Return items to proper location and cleanup after yourselves
Keep hands and feet to yourself	Use appropriate volume	Use appropriate volume	Use appropriate volume and language	Treat others' belongings with care	Keep bathroom clean	Stay seated	Return books by the due date
Use appropriate volume	Wait patiently	Listen	Be courteous	Respect others' privacy & personal space	Be Polite/ Use good manners	Allow presenter performers to be heard	Be Polite/ Use good manners
Keep middle of the hallway clear	Be Polite/ Use good manners	Be Polite/ Use good manners	Be Polite/ Use good manners	Be Polite/ Use good manners	Be Polite/ Use good manners	Be Polite/ Use good manners	Be Polite/ Use good manners
Keep your locker organized	Sit with positive friends	Arrive to class on time	Be on time	Use appropriate volume	Wash your hands	Listen	Have a pass when going to the LLC
Arrive to class on time	Keep area clean	Bring appropriate materials	Be prepared with ID	Pick up after yourself	Have a pass	Pay attention	Use appropriate volume
Use assigned locker	Recycle	Know the appropriate time to get out of your seat	Stay seated	Get dressed and be ready to participate		Keep hands and feet to yourself	Treat LLC belongings with respect
Eat and drink in lunchroom only			Keep hands and legs out of the aisles	Maintain sanitary habits		Sit in your assigned area	Eat and drink in lunchroom only
Keep hallways clean	Treat property with care	Be courteous during announcements	Keep seats and vehicle in good condition	Keep locker clean	Treat school property with care	Wait patiently for dismissal	Work while in the LLC
Listen and follow all adults' directions	Use well-mannered behaviors	Say "please" and "thank you"	Use well-mannered behavior	Treat school property with care		Show enthusiasm with applause only	Keep the LLC clean
Be courteous and polite to others	Treat others as you would like to be treated	Keep your area clean	Treat others the way you want to be treated	Be encouraging to others		Be a good participant	Treat LLC and lab materials with respect

Figure 7. Homestead Behavior Matrix.



Figure 8. Classroom posters with school-wide expectations.

The school personnel used Cool Tools which are behavior lesson plans developed by the Tier 1 Team to teach students explicitly these three school-wide expected behaviors at the start of each school year. Teachers had access to Cool Tools throughout the year and were encouraged to re-

teach specific behaviors as needed. As one of the PBIS coaches shared,

What typically happens is at the start of the school year, we have what we call Kick-off.

That would be all students—all staff rotating through the various locations, including a school bus, to explicitly teach behaviors within those locations. Then there's pretty much targeted times throughout the year. Usually around winter break, before, after, sometimes around spring break and PARCC testing, and then as data dictate.

Another PBIS coach conveyed a belief shared by other school personnel when discussing the Behavior Matrix and the role that teaching students prosocial specific behaviors plays in bullying prevention and intervention:

I think as far as relating it [Behavior Matrix] to bullying, the most clear-cut area would be the being respectful and keeping your hands and feet to yourself, using appropriate words, using good manners. All of these things are related to bullying with students. I would say that it's [bullying] not so clearly defined on the matrix. It's not like we have a column for bullying or how to avoid bullying but it's embedded in that, being respectful.

Furthermore, the PBIS framework at Homestead School included Tier 2 targeted interventions which include Check In Check Out (CICO) and Social Academic Instructional Groups (SAIG). A review of the entrance criteria for Tier 2 interventions at Homestead School indicated that students may be referred by teachers or parents, may self-refer, or be identified by the Tier 2 Team if they receive three or more ODRs in 1 month. According to the student self-referral form, students may ask to join CICO if a staff member has talked to them about it or they have received an ODR for the following behaviors: (a) defiance, (b) disrespect toward staff, (c) disrespect toward peers, (d) inattentive behavior, and (e) poor organization. A student who is self-referring is also asked to identify whether he/she wants to join CICO to (a) improve peer

relationships, (b) improve adult relationships, or (c) needs assistance adjusting. Students may also list the name of an adult they would like to have as a coach.

Similarly, a review of the teacher Tier 2 referral form indicated that a teacher may refer a student for similar behavioral concerns (up to three behavioral concerns can be selected): (a) defiance, (b) disrespect toward staff, (c) disrespect toward peers, (d) lacking relationships with peers, (e) lacking relationships with adults, (f) difficulty adjusting, (g) inattentive behavior, and (h) poor organization or due to a student or parent request. Bullying is not specifically listed on the student or teacher referral forms; however, some of the areas of concern, such as disrespect toward peers, difficulty with relationships with peers, or difficulty adjusting, could be problem behaviors related to bullying.

One of the main Tier 2 interventions at Homestead School includes CICO which increases the student's positive contact with adults. A student is paired with a coach and expected to check in and check out with his/her coach before and after school each day. The student is also expected to check in with each teacher at the end of each class period. This person rates his/her behavior on the daily behavior report card. At the end of the day, the coach reviews the expected behaviors and the student's goal and provides the student with feedback on his/her behavior. Students receive incentives for meeting their goals.

As noted in Table 11, during the 2016-17 school year, Tier 2 interventions at Homestead School also included three different small intervention groups such as (a) problem-solving skills group, (b) emotional management skills group, and (c) classroom survival skills group. Per Homestead's description of these groups, the first two groups focused on various aspects of emotion regulation, specifically helping students to learn how to express themselves appropriately, as well as identify and manage feelings. On the other hand, the classroom survival

skills group focused on helping students learn skills related to executive functioning. Per PBIS coaches, these SAIGs were co-facilitated by related services personnel and general education teachers. Each small intervention group typically comprised four-six students who met one-two times per week for the duration of 6-8 weeks. According to Homestead personnel, the curriculum was reviewed and approved by the district committee, and during the 2016-17 school year, Homestead was using the SAIG curriculum developed by Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee, WI.

Another PBIS support considered Tier 2.5 at Homestead School that students may receive if they were not responding to CICO and/or SAIG interventions included developing brief FBAs and BIPs. As one of the PBIS coaches noted, “Before we would write a simple FBA/BIP, they [students] would be nonresponders to two lower-level interventions.” According to another PBIS coach, the Tier 2 Team reviews the ODR data to know what behaviors to focus on in the brief FBA-BIP; however, the team also seeks more specific input from the student’s teacher because ODR data tend to be vague at times. As part of this process, a team member typically finds out from the student his/her motivation and the slow and fast triggers for the specific problem behaviors. Per a PBIS Tier 2 coach, it can be challenging to keep an FBA-BIP brief rather than, as she said, “avalanching” into a complex FBA-BIP due to the fact that students demonstrate more than one problem behavior. The principal summarized the process when he said,

It's for students that had—Tier 2 Check In Check Out hasn't been effective. They've gone through a SAIG group, and that hasn't proven to be effective. That's even with an individualized point sheet that's been focused on the goals that they're working on within the group. Then, we move to that next step of looking at a simple FBA/BIP for them to

try and help address the function of their behavior.

Furthermore, the school principal and PBIS coaches revealed that they were in the process of building Tier 3 interventions at Homestead School. However, during the 2016-17 school year, there were yet no set criteria for Tier 3 and each referral was reviewed on an individual basis.

As the principal noted, the Tier 3 Team was to examine closely the intensity of a student's needs and try to determine, "Okay, is this such an intense need that we really need to be pulling all these different members, whether it's community, or school, or family all together, to be wrapping around this student?" Thus, there were only three-four students who were identified as in need of the intensive Tier 3 interventions during the 2016-17 school year, and according to one of the PBIS coaches, none of them was a student with disability involved in bullying. The few students who needed Tier 3 interventions presented with some significant social-emotional problems largely related to environmental or socioeconomic factors. The Tier 3 Team offered services that tended to vary depending on the student's or family's need, but they could include mentoring at school or connecting the student and family with other community resources. Per the PBIS coach, the Tier 3 Team planned to meet with colleagues in the district during the summer 2017 to develop the criteria and some systematic protocols for Tier 3 interventions.

### **Tier 1 Bullying Prevention and the *Expect Respect* Program**

Bullying prevention and intervention at Homestead School is a district-wide initiative. According to the Parent Handbook from 2016-17, "a child needs to feel safe physically, mentally, and emotionally in order to perform to the best of his or her best, and bullying does not fit into this equation" (p. 32). One of the PBIS coaches shared that this district-wide commitment to bullying prevention originated with a bullying task force during the 2012-13

school year, which since then has been charged with developing programs and initiatives focusing on increasing awareness of bullying, preventing, and intervening with bullying. At this time, the bullying task force includes more than 30 members that comprise students, teachers, parents, resource officers, and administrators from all schools in the district (District Parent Handbook, 2016-17).

Homestead School, along with other schools in the district, began the process of implementing a Tier 1 bullying prevention and intervention program called *Expect Respect* (Stiller, Nese, Tomlanovich, Horner, & Ross, 2013) during the 2012-2013 school year. A PBIS coach described the process of selecting this program:

When we first had the [bullying] task force, the curriculum committee reviewed other things, and then wanted it to be aligned and a fit with what we were already doing. We specifically chose it [*Expect Respect*] for that reason. Then, we went for the training and then came back and trained our staff.

The *Expect Respect* parent brochure shared by the PBIS coach and posted on the school district website described some of the key tenets of this program. Thus, bullying is believed to be a behavior, rather than a character trait, that is maintained by social rewards from bystanders. The brochure further explains that students will continue to engage in bullying behavior if they receive attention from other peers, even if the students are taught positive behaviors and receive consequences. Another key tenet of *Expect Respect* is that adults are asked to refrain from using the label “bullying” with students but rather focus on teaching students how to respond to disrespectful behavior. Thus, students are taught the “Stop, Walk, and Talk” (SWAT) routine, one of the key components of *Expect Respect*, and encouraged to use it to stop disrespectful or bullying behavior (see Figure 9). Students are also taught a “Stop, Breathe, Leave” (SBL)

routine that describes what students need to do when they are asked by another peer to stop a disrespectful or bullying behavior (see Figure 10).



Figure 9. The SWAT routine.



Figure 10. The SBL routine.

## **Perspectives of School Personnel on Integrating Bullying Prevention and Intervention within PBIS**

Overall, a shared commitment to embedding bullying prevention and intervention efforts within the PBIS framework was a robust premise shared by the teaching staff, related services providers, PBIS coaches, and school administrators. Through teaching prosocial skills, particularly respectful behavior, and how to respond to disrespectful behavior, school personnel aimed to prevent bullying school-wide and establish a safe and positive school climate.

The aim of *Expect Respect* is to embed bullying prevention and intervention within PBIS. School personnel shared their perspectives on the extent to which bullying prevention and intervention efforts appear aligned and embedded within the PBIS framework at Homestead. Special education teachers, related services providers, and school administrators perceived *Expect Respect* and PBIS as two initiatives closely aligned. There were some opposing views among general education teachers. Half of the general education teachers perceived bullying as aligned with PBIS while the other half reported that *Expect Respect* and PBIS were separate initiatives. These general education teachers felt that more could be done to show students and staff how bullying prevention through *Expect Respect* is part of PBIS. Following are the views shared by individuals within the different groups of school personnel.

**General Education Teachers.** Teachers who shared the view that *Expect Respect* and PBIS were aligned recognized the role that teaching prosocial behaviors plays in bullying prevention. They noted that if students demonstrated the expected behaviors, they would be less likely to engage in bullying. These teachers pointed out that as part of PBIS, members of the Tier 1 Team analyzed ODR data to identify where problem behaviors were occurring and what positive behaviors needed to be retaught with Cool Tools or positively reinforced. They also

acknowledged that one of the Tier 2 SAIGs focuses on teaching students how to treat others and defining the put-downs that tend to be part of bullying behavior.

The other half of the general education teachers questioned the extent to which Homestead students and staff recognize the connection between PBIS and bullying prevention and intervention efforts. One of them noted, “The respect would probably be just that umbrella expectation that would hopefully prevent the bullying as well.” They expressed that bullying prevention and PBIS might be more aligned the following school year because one of the school-wide behavior expectations, “Be Proud,” would be replaced with “Be Safe.”

**Special Education Teachers.** Four out of five special education teachers indicated that bullying prevention and intervention efforts at Homestead were clearly aligned with PBIS because “Be Respectful” is one of the school-wide behavioral expectations in *Expect Respect* and PBIS. These special educators acknowledged that when students engaged in respectful behavior, they were not bullying others. Students were taught to take pride in developing a sense of community and not engaging in putting down other students. They noted that teachers were able to access Cool Tools lessons on Google Drive, and they could reteach the expected behaviors throughout the year.

One special education teacher, who disagreed with the view that bullying prevention and intervention efforts were integrated within PBIS, explained that PBIS celebrations were not tied into the SWAT routine and that school-wide reminders about the SWAT routine were not explicitly connected to PBIS.

**Related Services Providers.** This group of Homestead educators expressed that PBIS and *Expect Respect* both taught and promoted respectful behavior; therefore, they were closely linked. They identified several PBIS components that support bullying prevention such as Cool

Tools, PBIS campaigns, public service announcements, and signs and posters with expected behaviors.

One of the related services providers expressed a concern that PBIS needed to be more visible at Homestead and implemented more systematically. For instance, school personnel needed to utilize daily rewards more systematically and “catch” students demonstrating expected behaviors while also making sure that students with no behavior problems receive positive attention. This participant expressed concern that when PBIS is not implemented systematically, it affects the different components of *Expect Respect* that are supposed to be integrated into PBIS.

**School Administrators.** Similar to other school personnel, school administrators acknowledged that PBIS and *Expect Respect* both supported prevention of bullying behaviors, and thus these two programs were aligned. As one of the school administrators explained, this alignment stemmed from the fact that behavioral expectations, specifically respectful behavior and expectations for how to treat others, were clearly defined. Additionally, they explained that the *Expect Respect* club sponsor was a member of the Tier 1 Team, and if there was an increase in certain problem behaviors on ODR reports, this might be addressed through *Expect Respect*.

### **School Climate and Bullying Involvement at Homestead School**

To understand the impact of integrating bullying prevention and intervention within a PBIS framework, it is important to examine the school climate at Homestead School as well as the overall patterns and rates of bullying, as these would likely guide bullying prevention and intervention. In this section, I draw on findings from the annual school-wide survey completed in December 2016, ODR reports, and interviews with the participants to accomplish these goals. Homestead School annual surveys indicated that 74 staff members completed the teacher/staff

satisfaction survey, which included 85.14% of the licensed staff (principals, assistant principals, and teachers) and 14.86% of the support staff (licensed paraprofessionals, registered nurses, secretaries, custodians, and lunchroom supervisors). Furthermore, 92% of the students participated in the student satisfaction survey.

Nearly half of the teachers/staff and students, respectively, rated the school atmosphere as “good,” while 38.38% of the students and 22.98% of the staff described the school atmosphere as excellent (see Table 12). Thus, the overall school climate at Homestead appeared to be positive and students and school personnel felt safe at school.

Table 12

*Teacher/Staff and Student Perceptions of School Climate*

Teacher and Staff Satisfaction Survey	Student Satisfaction Survey
22.98% rated the school atmosphere as excellent	38.38% rated the school atmosphere as excellent (a rating of A or A-)
49.99% rated the school atmosphere as good (a rating of B+, B, or B-)	46.13% rated the school atmosphere as good (a rating of B+, B, or B-)
24.33% rated the school atmosphere as average (a rating of C+, C, or C-)	10.16% rated the school atmosphere as average (a rating of C+, C, or C-)
2.7% rated the school atmosphere as poor (Rating of D+ or D)	2.58% rated the school atmosphere as poor (a rating of D+ or D)
0.00% rated the school atmosphere as unacceptable (a rating of F)	2.75% rated the school atmosphere as unacceptable (a rating of F)
88.06% were proud of their school	83.98% felt proud of the school
84.06% felt they are an important part of the school	87.46% agreed that most other students are nice to them
97.30% felt safe while they are at school	91.84% felt safe while they are at school
	91.98% felt safe walking to and from school
	88.22% felt safe riding the bus.

*Note.* Adapted from the 2016-17 Homestead School satisfaction surveys.

Nearly two-thirds of teachers and staff who participated in the survey indicated that bullying was a common occurrence at Homestead, and 88.08% of them had either seen or been

aware of student bullying occurring at the school (see Table 13). In comparison, 44% of the students indicated that bullying happens often at Homestead. More specifically, one-third of the students reported being bullied at school and 6.56% of them had bullied others. Additionally, 59.20% of the students had seen other students bullied at the school; thus, they had been involved in bullying as bystanders.

Results from the survey suggest that verbal bullying was likely the most common form of bullying at Homestead School, as noted by both teachers/staff and students. Perspectives on cyberbullying varied between teachers/staff and students. While 53.85% of the teachers/staff reported that cyberbullying happens often among students at Homestead, only 25.67% of the students perceived cyberbullying happening often at the school. Furthermore, 16.09% of the students experienced cyberbullying and 3.62% of them engaged in cyberbullying others.

According to the teacher/staff survey results, hallways and student lockers were the main settings in which they tended to observe bullying. On the other hand, the student responses suggested that they had experienced or seen bullying in all locations to a similar extent. Less structured settings such as lunchroom, hallways, and lockers appeared to be more prone to bullying behavior. Findings from the teacher/staff and student satisfaction surveys offered valuable perspectives on bullying in general at Homestead School, yet there were no questions focused specifically on bullying involvement of SWD.

Table 13

*Teacher/Staff and Student Perspectives on Bullying Involvement*

	Teacher and Staff Satisfaction Survey	Student Satisfaction Survey
Bullying Involvement	63.01% of the teacher and staff felt that bullying was a common occurrence among students in their school 81.08% had seen or been aware of student bullying occurring at the school	44.21% of the students felt that bullying happened often at this school 59.20% had seen other students bullied at school 34.97% had been bullied at school 6.56% had bullied someone else at school 33.33% had never seen or experienced bullying in their school
Forms of Bullying	89.06% responded that students were being made fun of or called names 59.38% responded that students were being gossiped about 56.25% responded that students were being ignored or left out 37.50% responded that students engaged in physical harm such as being pushed, tripped, kicked, or hit 29.69% responded that students' personal property was being damaged or stolen	71.12% had seen or experienced students being made fun of, called names, or gossiped about 48.19% had seen or experienced students being ignored or left out 39.53% had seen or experienced physical harm such as being pushed, tripped, kicked, or hit 19.31% had seen or experienced students' personal property being damaged or stolen 23.47% had never seen or experienced bullying at school
Cyberbullying	53.85% felt that cyberbullying was a common occurrence among the students attending their school 62.34% were aware that a student attending their school had been cyberbullied	66.18% had never seen or experienced cyberbullying. 25.67% felt that cyberbullying happened a lot among their peers 16.09% had been cyberbullied 29.66% had seen or were aware of someone else being cyberbullied by another person 3.62% had cyberbullied someone else
Locations of Bullying	75.81% had seen bullying in the hallway or student lockers 43.55% had seen bullying in the classroom	46.15% had experienced or seen bullying in the lunchroom 43.59% had experienced or seen bullying in the hallway

Teacher and Staff Satisfaction Survey	Student Satisfaction Survey
35.48% had seen bullying in the lunchroom	or their locker
25.81% had seen bullying at recess	39.19% had experienced or seen bullying in the
20.97% had seen bullying in, before, or after school	classroom or gym
clubs or sports	38.28% had experienced or seen bullying at recess
19.35% had seen bullying in the gym class	30.77% had experienced or seen bullying in the
17.74% had seen bullying at the bus stop or on the bus	washroom or locker room
to or from school	28.94% had never seen or experienced bullying at
17.74% had seen bullying in the washroom or P.E.	school
locker room	
11.29% had seen bullying in other locations	

*Note.* Adapted from the 2016-17 Homestead School satisfaction surveys.

Notably, findings from the interviews with different school personnel corroborated the results from the Teacher/Staff Satisfaction Survey. There was an overarching theme that bullying *does* exist and *does* happen at Homestead in “small pockets;” however, overall, its prevalence is comparable to that in other middle schools. Overall, the participants did not perceive bullying to be a large-scale problem at Homestead School. Specifically, the related services personnel and school administrators reported that the majority of their time *was not* spent addressing bullying if they followed the most concrete definition of bullying. However, some of them noted that there was a general perception among Homestead students, staff, and parents that bullying was a larger problem than what it was based on their observations and experiences. As one of the related services personnel noted, “I think that it might be viewed by others as being a bigger problem because they don’t quite understand what is bullying and what is maybe more just disrespectful behavior or cruel behavior.” Furthermore, one of the school administrators shared,

Middle school kids tend to not always be nice, and I think there’s a perception that any time a student is not nice to someone, we jump all over it and say there’s bullying. The reality in terms of what I witness and what I deal with discipline is that it’s not bullying in that true sense and identification of what bullying is.

Additionally, one of the related services personnel expressed,

For the most part, I think when we look at priorities of children having difficulties, behavioral difficulties, I think that bullying is probably not the most prominent concern. From what I see, I think just managing behaviors, classroom behaviors, meeting classroom expectations, is the hardest and most difficult. Technology violations tend to come next. Bullying has been talked about, addressed since elementary buildings, and so

as kids have come up to this point, they've been exposed to general expectations of bullying, acceptable, unacceptable behaviors.

Although the school personnel tended to perceive bullying as not a large problem at Homestead, they conveyed a shared understanding that it is a serious problem that needs to be continually addressed. The principal captured the school personnel's commitment to bullying prevention and fostering a positive school climate that does not tolerate bullying: "The fact that there are what I perceive as bullying behaviors that occur in the building, I think is something that we need to address. Just its presence means that it's something that we have to work on."

In addition to gauging the level of bullying at Homestead School from the teacher/staff and student satisfaction surveys and individual interviews, it is important to consider that, similarly to other PBIS schools, school personnel utilized ODRs to record problem behaviors, including incidents of bullying, and to make data-based decisions with respect to system-wide and tiered interventions. Problem behaviors, based on their severity, were categorized as Majors and Minors and entered into SWIS, which summarized the data.

Bullying behavior (perpetration) was categorized as a Major on the ODR form, and a review of the 2016-17 report revealed that there were eight incidents of bullying, which comprised 2.05% of all problem behaviors categorized as Majors (see Figure 11).

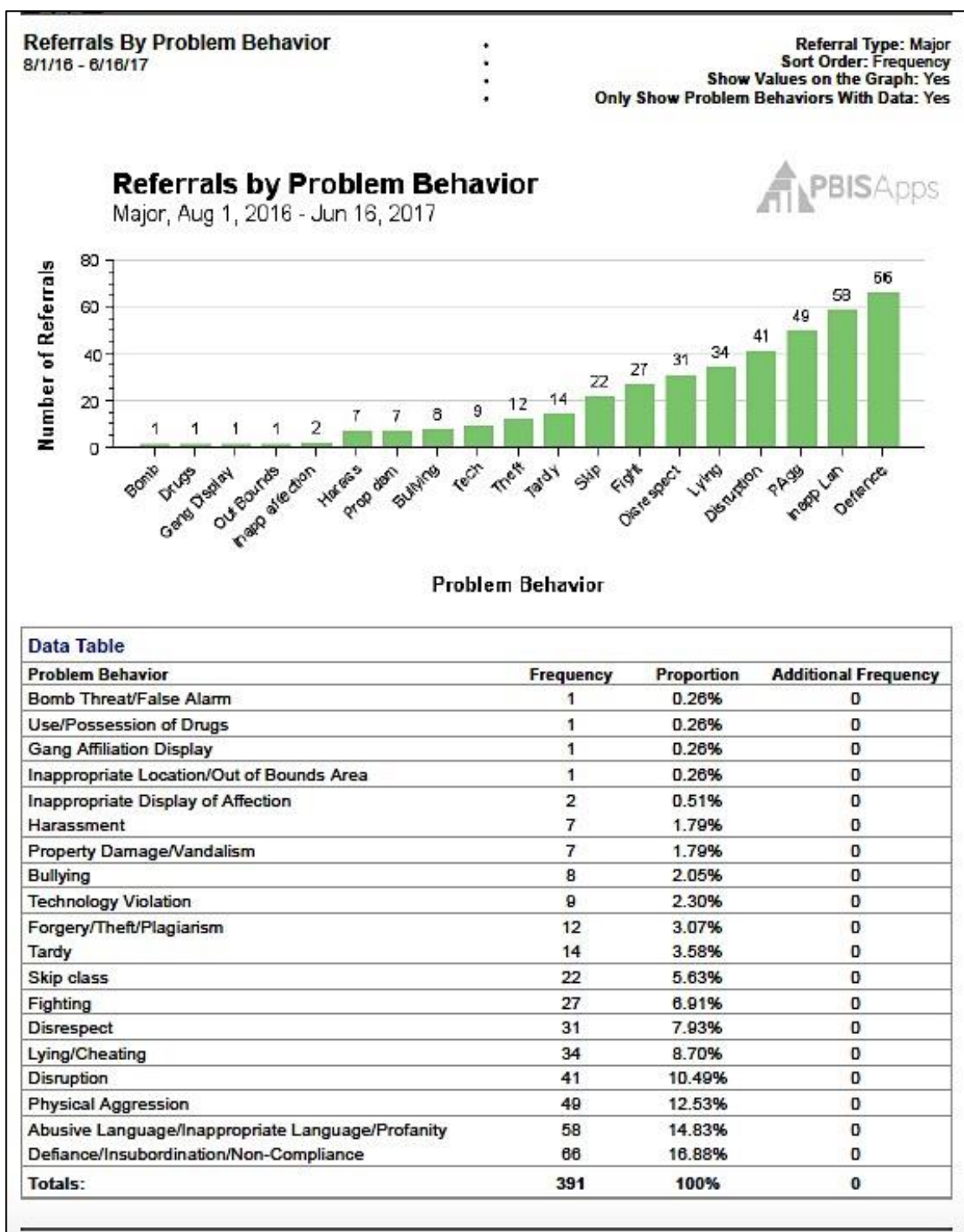


Figure 11. Office Discipline Referrals: Majors 2016-17.

Importantly, one of the PBIS coaches noted that SWD, more often than their peers without disabilities, were among the students who engaged in bullying behavior and received ODRs as a result:

When I run SWIS data, I can see the names of the students that were given an ODR, office discipline referral, for bullying behavior. I do not see who their victims were.

Interestingly, though, when I look at the names of the students, they are, a good portion of them, identified as special ed. I found that to be interesting.

Furthermore, she noted that most of these students had ED/BD as their primary disability.

Since at Homestead School staff focused on teaching and reinforcing respectful behavior, it is also important to note that disrespect was included on the ODR form as both a Major and Minor. Results from the 2016-17 SWIS report indicated that disrespect comprised 7.93% of all Majors and 11.39% of all Minors (see Figure 12). It is unclear whether this disrespectful behavior was demonstrated toward peers or adults.

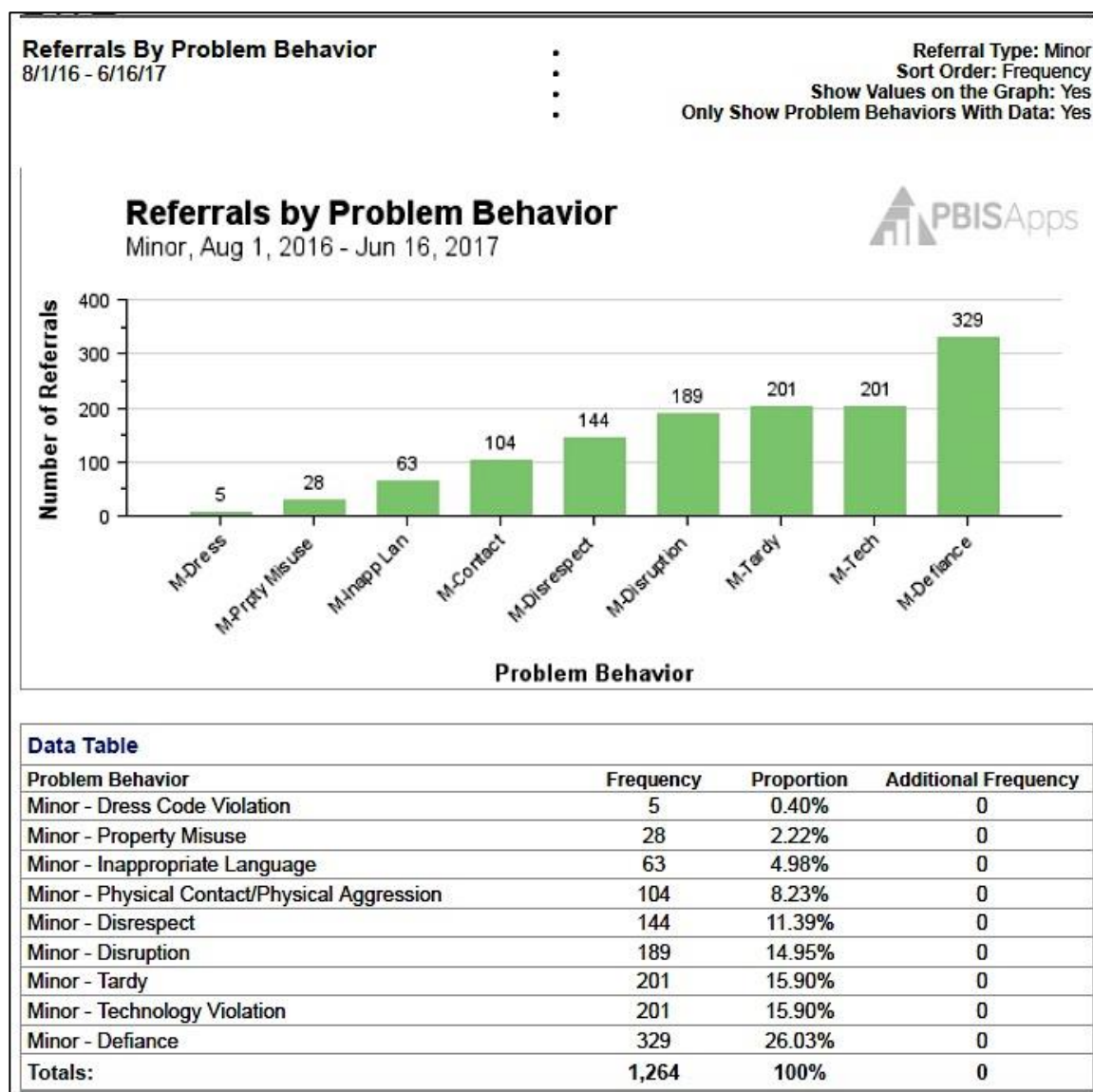


Figure 12. Office Discipline Referrals: Minors 2016-17.

It is important to note that PBIS coaches appeared to question whether the overall low number of bullying incidents in the 2016-17 SWIS report painted an accurate picture of bullying involvement at Homestead. They described the challenge of being able to identify bullying appropriately and differentiating it from other problem behaviors on the ODR form (see Figure 13). One of the PBIS coaches stated,

I'm not really sure that that's accurate just because when teachers are writing this up do they really know that it's bullying? There's a lot of options on the ODR form that I think could be cleaned up or at least clarified. What one person might see as bullying the other person might see as being disrespect. I don't really know that these numbers reflect that.

Another PBIS coach shared an insight: "Right, so that might make bullying look really low, but if you look at all those other fighting and aggression and tech violation and language, a lot more could be to blame. We're only allowed to pick one." She further elaborated that a teacher completing an ODR may identify a problem behavior (e.g., physical touch) as an isolated one-time occurrence, while this incident might be part of an ongoing pattern in other settings as well.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ Referring staff: _____ Teacher: _____ Grade: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Cafeteria <input type="checkbox"/> Locker Room <input type="checkbox"/> Hallway <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/> Library <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Lab <input type="checkbox"/> Bathroom <input type="checkbox"/> Bus	<input type="checkbox"/> Arrival <input type="checkbox"/> Dismissal <input type="checkbox"/> Office <input type="checkbox"/> Assembly/Event <input type="checkbox"/> Other
---	--	--	--

Minor Behavior Problem	Major Behavior Problem	Possible Motivation
<input type="checkbox"/> Defiance <input type="checkbox"/> Disrespect <input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliance <input type="checkbox"/> Disruption <input type="checkbox"/> Dress Code Violation <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate Language <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Contact/Physical Aggression <input type="checkbox"/> Property Misuse <input type="checkbox"/> Tardy <input type="checkbox"/> Technology Violation	<input type="checkbox"/> Abusive language/inappropriate language/Profanity <input type="checkbox"/> False Alarm <input type="checkbox"/> Defiance <input type="checkbox"/> Disrespect <input type="checkbox"/> Insubordination <input type="checkbox"/> Noncompliance <input type="checkbox"/> Disruption <input type="checkbox"/> Dress Code violation <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting <input type="checkbox"/> Forgery/Theft <input type="checkbox"/> Gang Affiliation Display <input type="checkbox"/> Harassment/Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate Display of affection <input type="checkbox"/> Lying/Cheating <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Aggression <input type="checkbox"/> Property Damage/Vandalism <input type="checkbox"/> Skip Class <input type="checkbox"/> Truancy <input type="checkbox"/> Tardy <input type="checkbox"/> Technology Violation <input type="checkbox"/> Use/possession of Weapons <input type="checkbox"/> Use/possession of Alcohol <input type="checkbox"/> Use/possession of Drugs <input type="checkbox"/> Use/possession of Tobacco
Possible Motivation: <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid adult <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid peer(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid tasks/activities <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain adult attention <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain item/activities <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain peer attention <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown motivation		

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Incident Outcome			
<input type="checkbox"/> Conference with student <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a behavior plan <input type="checkbox"/> Individualized Instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Re-Teaching <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a plan to meet expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Apology <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Contact	<input type="checkbox"/> Detention: Date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch <input type="checkbox"/> Before/After School <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday School (Parent must pick student up at 6PM) <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday School (Parent responsible for transportation)	<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to counselor <input type="checkbox"/> Team discussion with student <input type="checkbox"/> Suspension <input type="checkbox"/> Bus <input type="checkbox"/> In-School <input type="checkbox"/> Out-of-School (____ hours/days) <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<b>Others involved in the incident:</b> ____ None ____ Peers ____ Staff ____ Teacher ____ Substitute ____ Unknown ____ Other

Figure 13. Office Discipline Referral form.

As Figure 13 shows, the ODR form indeed included several problem behaviors that could be related to a “bullying behavior” if a student had demonstrated them intentionally and repeatedly toward a peer(s) with a lower status, such as disrespect, inappropriate language, physical aggression, and fighting. Thus, as noted by one of the PBIS coaches, a staff member completing an ODR or following up on the referral would likely need to engage in careful and thoughtful investigation to differentiate a single incident of disrespect, inappropriate language, or physical

aggression from a pattern of bullying behavior. Thus, the percentage of bullying behaviors indicated in the 2016-17 SWIS report was likely an underestimation of the bullying involvement at Homestead, particularly in light of the findings from the student satisfaction survey that revealed that 44.21% of the students felt that bullying happens often at this school, 59.20% of them had seen other students bullied at school, 34.97% of the students had been bullied at school, and 6.56% of them had bullied other students. In sum, the current ODR data provided some information about the level of bullying perpetration of SWD in the school within the PBIS framework; however, given the challenges with selecting the appropriate problem behavior and recognizing a pattern of bullying behavior, as well as the fact that ODRs do not account for bullying victimization, the 2016-17 SWIS report likely painted an incomplete picture of bullying involvement of SWD.

### **School Personnel's Perspectives on Bullying Involvement of SWD**

Although efforts have been undertaken to integrate the school-wide bullying prevention and intervention within the PBIS framework, there were limited data collected on the bullying perpetration and victimization of SWD. Thus, it was important to examine the extent to which the school personnel would perceive bullying of SWD to be a problem at Homestead School. One of the main themes that emerged was that school personnel tended to believe that bullying involvement of SWD (as victims, bullies, or bully-victims) was comparable to the level of bullying in the general education population. School personnel reported that bullying of SWD was not a large-scale problem or a regular occurrence at Homestead School. Although the participants tended to believe that bullying of SWD was not a common occurrence at Homestead, they acknowledged that SWD with less severe or less "obvious" disabilities who were included

in general education settings presented certain risk factors for bullying victimization and perpetration.

**General Education Teachers.** With respect to bullying involvement of SWD, general education teachers tended to believe that SWD were bullied no more or less than students without disabilities. One of the 6<sup>th</sup>-grade teachers shared a common sentiment expressed by her general education colleagues: "I feel like our school really embraces students with disabilities."

Yet, after additional probing, general education teachers revealed that peers without disabilities tend to be friendlier and kinder toward students with severe disabilities (e.g., they are treated like rock stars) who attended self-contained classrooms, while their attitudes toward students with disabilities included in general education classrooms tended to be different. More specifically, general education teachers shared some examples from the 2016-17 school year suggesting that SWD included in general education classrooms demonstrated some risk factors for bullying victimization and perpetration. For instance, peers without disabilities would pick on students with LD or ADHD because they tended to take a longer time to get their thoughts out, were likely to share inappropriate or incorrect comments, and tended to work at a slower pace. Another general education teacher described situations when students had been instructed to find partners for group work, and peers without disabilities were less likely to choose SWD as their partners, which led to some isolation and/or exclusion of SWD in the classroom.

General education teachers described situations when SWD included in general education classrooms were targeted for some bullying, yet they also pointed out that sometimes SWD had bullied others. SWD exhibited behaviors that could be perceived as bullying, when, in fact, these were behavior problems related to their disabilities (e.g., impulsivity, hyperactivity, inattention, shouting out), which their peers without disabilities would find frustrating. As one

of the special education teachers described a student with disability, “He's not trying to be a bad kid, but he's impulsive, and he's gonna shout out, and if you're working with him in a group, it's gonna be this.” Similarly, another general education teacher explained that SWD who had learning issues were likely to act out and engage in bullying behaviors as a way of dealing with their frustration and disability. One of them also noted that sometimes SWD would pick on others to combat being picked on.

**Special Education Teachers.** Like their general education counterparts, special education teachers shared a view that SWD were likely to be affected by bullying no more than their peers without disabilities. As one of them stated,

I don't see it being a larger problem for children with disabilities, more so than any other—a regular-ed. student. I have seen students with disabilities being bullied. I've seen them as a bully, but I don't foresee them being a more targeted population.

Even though special education teachers generally believed that, as a group, SWD were not affected by bullying more or less than youth without disabilities, like their general education counterparts, special education teachers identified several risk factors that students with disabilities included in general education classrooms were likely to present, which could lead to social exclusion. One of the special education teachers described the social exclusion of students with HF-Autism:

Because the other kids can't see that there's something wrong with them, they are often, not necessarily the target of bullying, but the target of, ‘He's doing this to me. Tell him to stop doing this. We don't wanna sit by him because he's doing this.’

She described another ongoing issue with a student with a disability who did not understand the appropriate social interactions. His classmates “come and tell on him and want him away from them.”

Additionally, special education teachers provided similar insight into how bullying might affect students with severe disabilities at Homestead differently compared to students with high-incidence disabilities (e.g., EBD, ADHD, LD). One of the special education teachers contrasted and summarized the bullying experiences of students with high-incidence disabilities compared to those with low-incidence and more severe disabilities:

Our students reach out a lot. Many of them offer to drive the wheelchairs or be their peer buddy in gym, so the students that have more physical disabilities tend to be treated pretty well. I think that it's the students that have these disabilities that might be social-emotional related or students with learning disabilities who struggle to keep up at the same pace as their peers probably experience bullying at a larger scale.

**Related Services Providers.** Similarly, the related services personnel appeared to agree that the involvement of SWD in bullying was comparable to that of their general education peers, and, overall, it was not a large problem at Homestead. One of the social workers noted that the presence of special education programs serving students with a wide range of disabilities has had a positive effect on preventing bullying of SWD: "I would say that there, again, that's relatively minor simply because the exposure of children with disabilities and the integration into the general population has been ongoing. It is just a well-accepted practice."

Although they shared the view that bullying of SWD was not a large-scale problem, related services personnel described some bullying incidents that shed light on the nature of bullying of SWD at Homestead School. Similar to general education and special education

teachers, the related services providers described how bullying may differently affect students with more severe (visible) vs. less severe (non-visible) disabilities at Homestead. One of them noted,

There's a marked difference between how students respond to those kids who are in wheelchairs, those kids who are just—it's obvious their disabilities. Those kids who, say, kids that are on the spectrum, kids that have limited social skills, they're the ones that usually get some degree of bullying because many times they look like the other kids, but they don't always respond, act, or function like the younger students. There's a difference in their functioning and so sometimes kids are not understanding, not tolerant, and can be pretty mean.

In addition to relatively poor social skills, one of the related services providers shared that SWD tend to lack social awareness and might not realize that they were being bullied:

I can see how there might be other students with disabilities that probably struggle with that social learning piece and how they understand situations and what people's intentions are. They might even be oblivious to disrespectful behavior or bullying, just cuz of how they interpret situations. I can see it maybe being more so something to work on with them, so that they understand it better.

**School Administrators.** This group of educators described Homestead School as an inclusive building and shared the view of other participants that bullying of SWD was uncommon. They expressed that students recognized and understood the differences among students, and that their peers without disabilities tended to be protective of SWD:

In fact, I feel like most of the time it's our students with disabilities that others are more willing to stand up for them. It's when we have regular ed. peers or somebody that maybe doesn't have those differences that then people are like, oh, you're on your own.

Another school administrator recalled two bullying incidents involving SWD during the school year. One of them involved a 6th-grade girl with LD who presented with relatively poor social skills and was the recipient of verbal bullying from boys. After her teacher had addressed the situation, the bullying behavior continued, and the school administrator had to intervene. He mentioned reteaching the expected behaviors and giving consequences to the boys who bullied this girl. Another school administrator shared,

I can really only think of a handful of instances where some of our special education students who maybe have more of an emotional or behavioral need become the actual bullies. Where they're actually exerting some sort of control or power over other students. I don't feel that there's as much of a concern with students with disabilities being victims, as much as trying to work through some of our students to prevent them from bullying actions.

She recalled two students with EBD who were bullying each other:

Both of them felt like they were the bully, tried to exert their power over each other. Definitely, social status, maintaining that control over others. Trying to keep their perceived social status. I think that's generally what has been the cause of most of the instances that I've dealt with is that perception of peers and wanting to make sure that they stayed at the top of that peer hierarchy.

Finally, the third administrator provided an example of one student with EBD who verbally bullied several students:

This particular student was bigger in size, as well, so I think maybe he intimidated a lot of people. Maybe he got away with a lot of things. Kids just allowed it to happen, just maybe because of his size, or that intimidation factor.

### **Summary of the Main Themes**

The PBIS framework allows school professionals to establish and promote a positive school climate at Homestead School. The main premise shared by the school personnel is that teaching students the school-wide prosocial expected behaviors decreases the likelihood of their involvement in bullying. Particularly, the focus on teaching and reinforcing respectful behavior and responding to disrespectful behavior is the key component of bullying prevention and intervention at Homestead School. Through adopting *Expect Respect*, bullying prevention and intervention efforts had been integrated within the school's PBIS framework. School personnel, specifically, special education teachers, related services providers, and school administrators, perceived bullying prevention and intervention to be aligned with PBIS. Among general education teachers, some acknowledged that bullying prevention and intervention efforts were integrated and aligned with PBIS, while others noted that they appeared to be separate initiatives and that more could be done to align them.

School personnel also reported believing that bullying involvement of SWD at Homestead School was comparable to that of students without disabilities. However, the current data collection provides insufficient information about the level of bullying involvement of SWD in this school. Although SWD participated in the teacher/staff and student surveys, their perspectives were not separated from those of their peers without disabilities, and thus it is unclear how they responded to bullying and the extent to which they used the SWAT routine.

Furthermore, general and special education teachers as well as related services providers revealed that peers without disabilities were likely to be friendlier and kinder toward students with severe disabilities who attended self-contained classrooms while their attitudes toward students with less visible disabilities included in general education classrooms were different. General and special education teachers as well as related services providers described characteristics related to one's disability that put SWD attending general education classrooms at risk for bullying victimization, specifically social exclusion, as well as bullying perpetration.

### **Research Question Two. Responding to Reports of Bullying Perpetration and/or Victimization of SWD**

In the following section, I describe the key components of the district anti-bullying policy which defines bullying and describes responses required by school personnel to reports of bullying. I will also share the perspectives of the four types of school personnel with respect to how they define and respond to bullying. I pay close attention to similarities and differences in their responses to SWD to better understand how bullying prevention and intervention is embedded within the multi-tiered framework. I will draw on insight from the interviews with the four types of school personnel as well as findings obtained from various documents and physical artifacts.

#### **Bullying Definition**

A bullying definition is key to differentiating bullying from other problem behaviors and responding appropriately (Mishna et al., 2005; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Per the district anti-bullying policy, bullying was defined as “any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct (including communications made in writing or electronically) that is directed toward a student or students” (p. 37), which significantly affect or interfere with the students' physical or

mental well-being, academic performance, or participation in the school services and activities.

Additionally, the district anti-bullying policy stated that

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited. (p. 37)

Interviews with the four types of school personnel revealed that they were able to identify some of the key components of the bullying definition; however, there appeared to be no shared definition of bullying that the general education teachers, special education teachers, related services providers, and school administrators used consistently. Table 14 displays the main components of bullying definitions shared by Homestead School personnel.

Table 14

*School Personnel's Bullying Definitions*

General Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers	Related Services	School Administrators
It's a pattern, frequent repeated behavior, not a one-time occurrence.	It is ongoing, pervasive, occurs over an extended period of time.	It is repeated, pervasive, intentionally hurtful, negative treatment of another student where a student with some power tries to use it over another student.	It has to be repeated, ongoing, pervasive, happens over time.
Bullying is any time someone puts someone down.			There is a power differential between the bully and victim.
It is a targeted behavior.			It is a deliberate and intentional attempt to intimidate, agitate, and put down.

**General Education Teachers' Definition of Bullying.** The following were key features of the bullying definition described by general education teachers: ongoing, repeated, and intentional negative behavior that continues to occur even after the victimized student asked his/her peer(s) to stop. Importantly, two of the six general education teachers subscribed to a broader definition of bullying:

To me, anytime you'd put someone down, or you aim to hurt their feelings, to me, it would be bullying. It's not just being shoved up and punched. That to me, would be a very severe case. It can literally be as simple as just being ignored. You're working in a group of five and you're just the odd man out. I think all of those things would fall under the umbrella of bullying.

Similarly, another general education teacher stated, "Bullying is any time you do anything that puts another student down or makes that student feel uncomfortable, unappreciated, or not a part of the class." Only one general education teacher mentioned the difference in the power status between a bully and victim.

**Special Education Teachers' Definition of Bullying.** Similarly, special education teachers described bullying as a repetitive and pervasive negative behavior or series of interactions. Only two of them described the power differential between victims and bullies. As one of them put it, "I would say bullying is where a student is exerting some sort of power over another student for a longer period of time." Likewise, only two of them shared that bullying is intentional or targeted. One special education teacher contrasted bullying to peer conflict: "Yeah, kids can be mean, and you can have disagreements with your best friend or with the kid in class that you don't like, but that doesn't mean someone's being bullied." One of the five special education teachers described a broader bullying definition: "I would say it's any action

towards another peer that makes them feel uncomfortable or hurt in any way. It does not need to be physical, obviously it can be mental or emotional as well.”

**Related Services Providers’ Definition of Bullying.** Similarly to general education and special education teachers, the related services providers viewed bullying as a negative behavior that was pervasive, intentional, and occurred repeatedly. A definition provided by one of the social workers captured the main features of the definition of bullying articulated by general education teachers and special education teachers and, in addition, it shed light on the role of a power differential, specifically as it relates to SWD:

I would define bullying as any type of negative behavior, whether it’s verbal, written, physical, emotional, etc., that is done repetitively. It’s not just the one-time occurrence. It’s done repetitively in trying to gain some power over a person or maybe perceived that you have this power over someone. In this instance, I’m a student who doesn’t have a disability. Intellectually, socially, I feel like I’m better off than this other student. I’m going to use that to my advantage. That might make me help—that might help me feel better about myself. Put me in a position to where I can utilize that to my advantage.

**School Administrators’ Definition of Bullying.** According to this group of educators, bullying involves ongoing, pervasive, and intentional negative behavior; however, “There has to be someone who is perceived at a higher stance than someone else.” One of them noted that bullying is “a pattern, this is happening repeatedly, and it is the deliberate attempt to bother, or agitate, or aggravate, to put down. It’s very deliberate, and it’s happening repeatedly.” The same school administrator stated that in a middle school with over 600 adolescents, peer conflict often happens and requires an appropriate response; however, bullying, unlike peer conflict, typically involves more students and it is done repeatedly. In order to differentiate bullying from

other negative behaviors, another administrator noted that she thoroughly investigates the situation by asking students detailed questions about the history and background behind the situation:

‘Well, tell me about what’s going on. How long has this been going on? Tell me about when it started. Tell me about how you’ve responded. Okay, well it’s been going on for two months. Have you told anyone about it? Have you talked to your parents? Have you talked to an adult?’

The Homestead principal acknowledged that bullying is a complex concept, which has become a “label” frequently used within the school community and in society without paying closer attention to its true definition. He shared, “It’s something that as a staff we really try to work hard on understanding what is really the definition of that and not being as free to throw it around as maybe the community or society is.” In addition, he shared that if the problem behavior did not match this definition, it was still considered to be disrespectful behavior that needed to be addressed. One core difference between bullying and disrespectful behavior according to this administrator, was the ongoing repeated nature of bullying. He specified,

I do go back to those three points. One, is it happening over the course of time? Two, is it specifically seeking out or targeting a student or a group of students? Three, is that person trying to exercise some type of power or authority over others?

This school administrator also acknowledged that in some situations bullying might be occurring for an extended time; however, it may not be visible to adults, and therefore, it was not reported. Thus, according to this administrator, differentiating bullying from disrespectful behavior can be challenging at times.

## **Responding to Reports of Bullying**

In addition to defining bullying, the district anti-bullying policy describes procedures for reporting, investigating, and intervening with bullying in the schools. Thus, students and staff are encouraged to report bullying to the district's complaint manager, school's principal, or any other school personnel in person, via email, phone, or by using the anonymous "Safe Schools Alert" found on the school website. Furthermore, the district anti-bullying policy states that parents of all students involved in bullying will be promptly informed, and the district will promptly respond to the report of bullying; however, the school district has 10 days to investigate the report of bullying. It is reported that school personnel with "knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention" may be involved in the investigation of bullying (p. 38).

The district anti-bullying policy also describes examples of services that could be considered for students who demonstrate bullying behavior such as "school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services" (p. 38). Following is how the district anti-bullying policy defines "restorative measures:"

a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline (such as suspensions and expulsions) that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school. (p. 38)

As noted earlier, *Expect Respect* aims at embedding Tier 1 school-wide bullying prevention within PBIS, and it includes some explicit routines for how both adults and students need to respond to bullying. According to one of the PBIS coaches, Homestead School personnel have been provided with visuals of the SWAT routine and the questions they need to ask the reporting and accused students when responding to disrespectful or bullying behavior (see Figure 14).

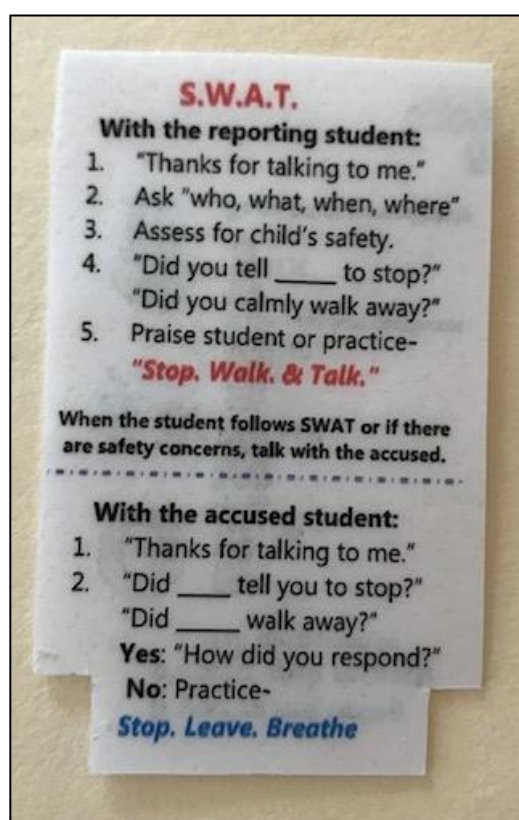


Figure 14. School personnel's response to reports of disrespectful or bullying behavior.

To gain deeper insight into how school personnel and students respond to bullying at Homestead, results from the teacher/staff and student satisfaction survey were further examined and revealed some discrepancies between the teachers/staff and students (see Table 15).

Table 15

*Responding to Bullying*

Teacher and Staff Satisfaction Survey	Student Satisfaction Survey
<i>Most Common Actions Taken by a Student who Had Been Bullied</i>	<i>Actions Likely Taken by a Student who Had Been Bullied (What would you do if you were bullied?)</i>
40.30% responded that the student does nothing.	14.89% would do nothing.
35.82% responded that the student tells a trusted teacher/adult.	67.78% would tell a trusted teacher/adult.
8.96% responded that the student tells the person who is bullying him/her to stop (or stop, walk, and talk).	69.00% would tell the person who is bullying him/her to stop (or stop, walk, and talk).
13.43% responded that the student calls the person who is bullying him/her names.	8.41% would call the person who is bullying names.
1.49% responded that the student fights the person who is bullying	20.32% would fight the person who is bullying him/her.
<i>Reporting Bullying to Adults</i>	<i>Reporting Bullying to Adults</i>
55.56% responded that when they have been informed by a student that he/she is being bullied, their action has resolved the issue(s) for the student.	23.22% responded that the bullying stopped after they had told an adult at school about a bullying experience.
23.61% responded that when they have been informed by a student that he/she is being bullied, their action has not resolved the issue(s) for the student.	21.31% responded that the bullying did not stop after they had told an adult at school about a bullying experience.
20.83% responded that they have not been informed by a student that he/she is being bullied.	55.47% had never told an adult about a bullying experience.

*Note.* Adapted from the 2016-17 Homestead School satisfaction surveys.

Only 8.96% of the teachers/staff reported that students who had been bullied utilized the SWAT routine and told the other student who bullied him/her to stop or use the three steps including stop, walk, and talk. In comparison, 69% of the students indicated that if they were bullied they would tell the person to stop or they would walk away and talk to an adult. Similarly, more than two-thirds of the students (67.78%) indicated that if they had been bullied, they would report the incident to a trusted teacher/adult. In comparison, only one-third (35.82%) of the teachers/staff reported believing that students who had been bullied reported the incident to a trusted teacher/adult. Thus, it appears that Homestead teachers/staff reported that students likely underutilize the SWAT routine to respond to disrespectful behavior.

Similarly, noteworthy patterns emerged when Homestead teachers/staff and students were asked about what happens after students report their bullying experience to an adult (see Table 15). More than half (55.56%) of the teachers/staff reported that they were able to resolve the issue for students after they reported being bullied, while fewer than one-fourth (23.22%) of the students stated that the bullying stopped after they reported it to an adult. A comparable percentage of the Homestead teachers/staff (23.61%) and students (21.31%) indicated that the bullying did not stop after they had reported an incident to an adult at school. Furthermore, 69% of the students reported that they would likely tell a trusted teacher/adult if they had been bullied, while 55.47% of the students indicated that they had never told an adult about their bullying experience. These data suggest that Homestead students were likely to underreport bullying to adults. It is also plausible that in some cases students were able to resolve the issue on their own without the need to report to an adult.

While results from the teacher/staff and student satisfaction survey established the foundations for understanding how school personnel and students were likely to respond to

bullying, they did not provide any information about how adults were likely to respond to bullying involving SWD or the extent to which SWD use the SWAT routine. In the following section, I describe the perspectives of different school personnel with respect to how they were likely to respond to the reports of bullying and what, if anything, is different in their approach when SWD are involved in bullying. Figure 15 shows similarities across different school personnel in responding to bullying reports.

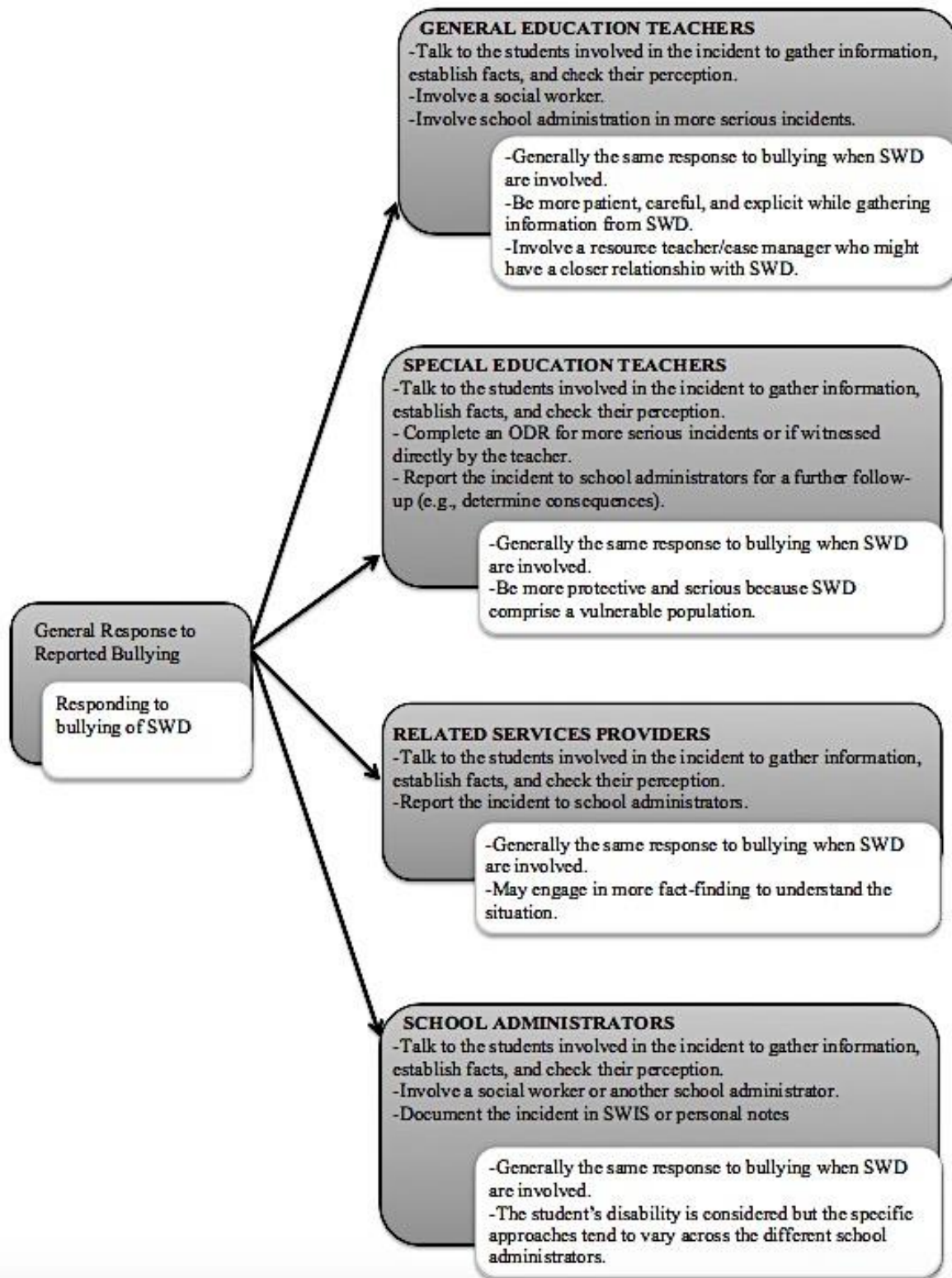


Figure 15. Similarities across school personnel in responding to bullying reports.

SWD = students with disabilities; ODR = office discipline referral; SWIS = School-Wide Information System

**General Education Teachers Responding to Reports of Bullying.** General education teachers described the importance of gathering information from students involved in bullying and taking these reports seriously. They conveyed their willingness and readiness to respond to bullying; however, they were likely to ask a grade-level social worker to talk to the involved students and help them process their feelings. With more serious and/or ongoing issues with bullying (e.g., frequent put downs toward students, numerous write-ups for disrespectful language to other students, and putting hands on another student in an intimidating manner), the general education teachers were likely to report students to the school administrators who assessed whether there was a pattern of bullying and determined appropriate consequences.

These general education teachers tended to follow a similar approach when responding to the reports of bullying when SWD are involved as either bullies or victims. However, they also tended to be more patient, careful, and explicit while gathering information from SWD. One of them shared,

A regular kid, if they're continuing to do it, you can write a warning or write 'em up, but if it's a kid with special needs, I feel like they need more just explanation from an adult.

Like teaching them the right way to behave. I guess a bit more patient with them.

Additionally, as part of their response to bullying of SWD, the general education teachers reported communicating with the appropriate IEP team members. As one of the general education teachers pointed out, SWD usually have "a few more advocates," which includes special education teachers and social workers. The general education teachers noted that a special education teacher might know SWD better and have a close relationship, and thus be able to come up with a plan on how to deal with bullying or address their feelings.

Only one general education teacher discussed explicitly using the SWAT routine when responding to bullying of both students with and without disabilities. She described validating the SWD's decision to report bullying:

I mean we try to encourage the kids to tell an adult. The way that we are supposed to respond, then, is to say—make sure we let them know, like, ‘Thank you for telling us. Thank you for sharing this with us,’ so that they feel validated in their decision to do that. The teacher then can go intervene with the student who is bullying and keep an eye on the situation and make sure that it stops, just to get that student who feels as though they’re being bullied the reassurance that it’ll end.

**Special Education Teachers Responding to Reports of Bullying.** Like their general education counterparts, special education teachers emphasized the importance of gathering information and facts from students involved in bullying to understand their perceptions of the situations. When the bullying behavior has continued for a while, the special education teachers described completing an ODR and involving school administrators to determine a consequence. Two special education teachers also noted the importance of monitoring more closely the students involved in bullying, particularly in less structured areas (e.g., hallways) following the reports of bullying. As one of the special education teachers noted, after reporting bullying to a social worker and administration, she would be “more vigilant in trying to observe those students in the classroom, trying to monitor their interactions.” Only one special education teacher mentioned explicitly following the steps of the SWAT routine when responding to bullying.

Similarly to general education teachers, special education teachers indicated that their response to bullying of SWD tended to be similar to how they reported handling bullying reports of students without disabilities. This included talking directly with the involved students to

check their perspective and establish facts. Additionally, these special education teachers described being more serious and protective of SWD when they were victims of bullying because they comprise a vulnerable population. One of them shared, “As a special ed teacher, I would probably admittedly be a little bit more accusatory towards the person who is a bully. Initially, I do get a little too motherly over the students with disabilities.” Another special education teacher shared,

I feel like it—I would try to be unbiased, but I don’t know if I could. I feel like I would take that a little harder. I feel like it’s a vulnerable population, and I take it to heart when somebody is targeting somebody that’s more vulnerable, especially the students on my caseload that I’m maybe a little more protective of. Where I don’t think my response to the situation would be different, I think I might take it a little more personal or a little—take it a little more to heart.

Similarly, another special education teacher conveyed a similar response: “My tone of voice, my attitude, my demeanor may change a little, ’cause it just angers me a little more if you see somebody, especially with a physical disability, it’s like, no, that’s not gonna happen.”

**Related Services Providers Responding to Reports of Bullying.** All related services providers communicated that they follow up with students involved in bullying to gather facts and gain their perspective on the situation (e.g., alleged bully and victim and any bystanders), and they eventually inform school administrators. One of the social workers noted that she tries to listen actively and be supportive and nonjudgmental. She shared,

Like I said, listen for those details. Almost asking the WH questions. Now necessarily the who, cuz the student may not feel comfortable reporting who specifically, at least at first. ‘When did it happen? Where did it happen? How often has it happened? How did

it make you feel when that occurred? What did you try and do in response?’ I’m always very cognizant of, depending on the situation, having to have someone retell you what happens could be uncomfortable.

She raised the point of being careful not to revictimize the targeted students by questioning them and being cognizant of “how hard it might be for them to come up to tell me something.”

Another social worker shed more light on the importance of engaging in careful investigation that is required to appropriately identify bullying:

We will immediately engage in that kind of dialogue so that all parties either understand maybe that was not bullying. Maybe that was something else. Maybe you perceived it differently. Maybe it was just how you took it. Or maybe it wasn’t in fact bullying.

Let’s deal with that, too. Many times I’ll get kids to come down and say, ‘This person has done this.’ When we sit and try to analyze what’s happened, perceptions are not always the same.

Similar to the interviewed general education teachers and special education teachers, related services providers indicated that they are likely to respond to bullying involving SWD in ways that are similar for their peers without disabilities, but they might engage in more fact finding to establish facts and understand the situation.

**School Administrators Responding to Reports of Bullying.** All school administrators described a careful investigation they engage in to gain different perspectives on what happened when bullying is reported to them. They reported asking students many questions to establish facts and to determine whether the episode was of bullying or a singular event or a case of adolescents not being nice to each other. Sometimes, they reported seeking support from social workers and other administrators when responding to bullying reports. While describing the

importance of fact finding and careful investigating involved in responding to reports of bullying, the Homestead principal shared a new approach that he had tried during the school year:

I think we're still developing some different methods of either how do we support students. I've started actually calling students at home as opposed to calling them down to the office during the school day, because people recognize when they're leaving class and coming down to the office. I've noticed that students feel a little more open to talk because they know their peers aren't watching them leave the class and then come back in with a pass from the office.

Additionally, the school administrators described documenting a given bullying incident in SWIS and/or their personal notes. As one of them noted,

We still use SWIS. Now, as far as—when I'm filling out my referral form, I'm only commenting on the behavior that the students receive and the consequence for. I'm not adding notes of who I spoke to, or the process that I went through, or anything like that. Those are usually just my own notes that I'm keeping. What's entered into SWIS is what's the behavior that we saw, what are they receiving a referral or a consequence for, and then what was the intervention or the outcome that occurred.

Furthermore, the school administrators, unlike general education teachers, special education teachers, and related services providers, appeared to be more likely to inform and communicate with the students' parents. One of them specifically shared that he might involve the family of the student who engaged in bullying behavior and the victim of bullying by implementing a restorative circle. Ultimately, he reported attempting to help students understand and agree about how they are going to treat each other.

The school administrators reported responding to bullying in a similar manner regardless of whether students were identified with or without disabilities. Notably, each one of them identified some additional steps they would consider in bullying cases involving SWD. The principal shared,

What I would say is the response or the outcome might differ, depending on their awareness or understanding. Obviously, if a student has a disability and if we determine that their disability helped to influence that, then we're taking that into account.

He noted that some SWD, especially students with HF-Autism, may have weaknesses in their social development and have difficulty participating in a restorative circle. He stressed that, regardless of the student's disability, he always communicates with parents.

In every situation, I'm apologizing to them that that occurred and that's what happened to them, that it shouldn't happen, so I'm helping to validate their concerns or why they're feeling a certain way, and that it's not right, and they should just accept it. We're going through different strategies of how to respond if something like that were to happen again.

Another school administrator noted,

The added step is that I think that in any instance where a student with special needs was involved, they will, more than likely, the classroom teacher, the first contact is going to be back to the case manager to make them aware of the situation. Whereas, with a general education student, I don't know that there would necessarily be any additional follow-up with other classroom teachers. For any of our special education students, that teacher who initially dealt with it would go back to the case manager and make sure they

were aware of the situation for follow-up. Other than that, there would be nothing different for a special ed.

This school administrator also shed light on the importance of involving an IEP team when responding to bullying of SWD:

I think the added element is bringing in, maybe a different team to look at that, as opposed to just the general education student, where it might be administration and maybe a social worker that might be involved. A special education student, we might be looking at it a little more globally, in terms of bringing in the whole IEP team.

### **Summary of the Main Themes**

All school personnel were able to identify some key features of a bullying definition, such as repeated, ongoing, targeted behavior, and they differentiated it from other problem behaviors; however, they did not share a universal definition of bullying. Related services providers and school administrators were more likely than general education teachers and special education teachers to include the imbalance in strength and power that can lead to asymmetric relationships between the bully and victim.

Furthermore, school personnel reported responding to the bullying of SWD and peers without disabilities in the same or a similar manner. They gather information from the students, establish facts, and report bullying to school administrators. In addition, general education teachers reported communicating with the student's case manager/special education teacher and involving related services personnel as necessary. Special education teachers reported feeling protective toward SWD when they were victimized because they viewed these students as more vulnerable than their peers without disabilities. Overall, from the perspectives of different

school personnel (units of analysis), it appears that school personnel were likely to take additional time to investigate the reports of bullying involving SWD.

The use of ODRs to document bullying after it was reported did not appear to be a consistent or common practice across the different school personnel. Only special education teachers and school administrators mentioned completing ODRs as part of their response to the reports of bullying.

Furthermore, according to *Expect Respect*, all teachers and staff members needed to use the SWAT routine when responding to reports of bullying (i.e., thank the student for reporting bullying behavior, assess the student's safety, ask the student if she/he told the other peer to stop and walked away, and reteach the SWAT routine); however, few participants described the SWAT routine as part of the protocol they followed when responding to bullying.

Finally, of the four types of school personnel, school administrators were most likely to describe communicating with parents in response to reports of bullying.

### **Research Question Three. Similarities and Differences in Bullying Prevention and Intervention Practices Within and Across School Personnel**

In addition to understanding how various school personnel are likely to respond to reports of bullying involving SWD, it is important to describe the different components of bullying prevention and intervention they might utilize and how they might perceive their effectiveness. Figure 16 demonstrates the main themes that emerged while in the section below I describe both similarities and differences found within each type of school personnel (unit of analysis) when they discussed their experiences with bullying prevention and intervention at Homestead School.

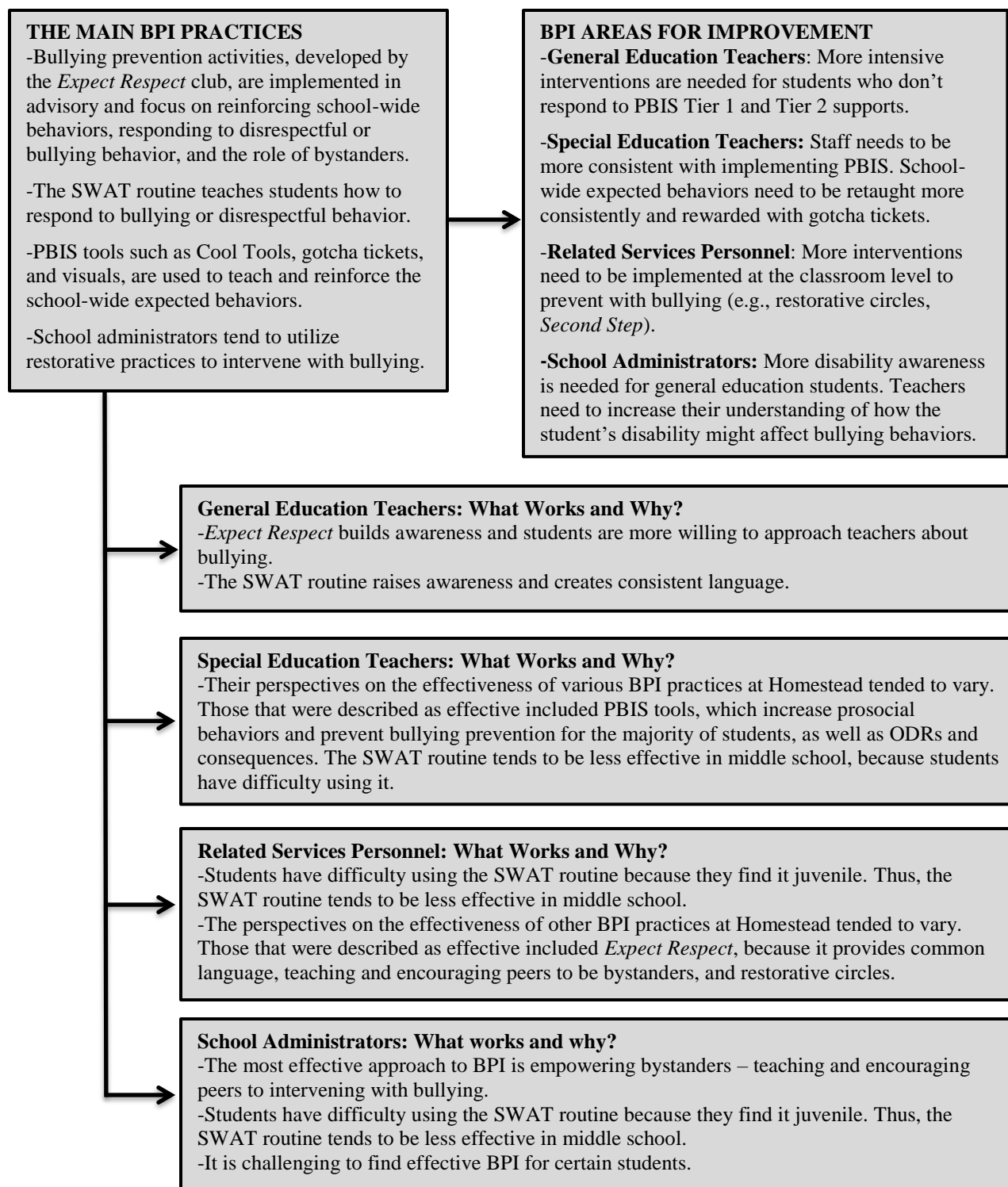


Figure 16. School personnel's perspectives on bullying prevention and intervention.

BPI = bullying prevention and intervention; SWD = students with disabilities; SWAT = Stop, Walk, and Talk; PBIS = Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports; ODR = office discipline referral; SEL = social and emotional learning

### **General Education Teachers' Experiences with Bullying Prevention and Intervention**

Overall, general education teachers acknowledged that *Expect Respect* is the primary bullying prevention and intervention support at Homestaed School. They reported viewing this program as effective because it was designed to build an awareness of bullying so that students were more willing to approach teachers about bullying. The main component of *Expect Respect* they discussed included brief videos followed by activities and discussions created by the student members of the *Expect Respect* club. The teachers mentioned that some of the videos might be incorporated into the Cool Tools stations at the start of the year when PBIS expectations were reviewed. Later in the school year, teachers could facilitate these bullying prevention activities in the advisory class. Advisory is the first period and includes a smaller group of students (approximately 15) to build closer teacher-student relationships. Although these videos featured students who were members of the *Expect Respect* club which, according to some school personnel, tends to increase student buy-in, some students reportedly had difficulty taking the bullying prevention seriously.

Several teachers described the SWAT routine as an effective bullying prevention and intervention practice, because it was designed to raise awareness and create consistent language and approach for students and staff to respond to disrespectful and bullying behavior. As one of them shared, "I think SWAT is effective because it gives everyone a system to work within; you know what to do, you know what to say." General education teachers shared that students were more willing to approach teachers about bullying as a result of being taught the SWAT routine. One of the teachers, who also agreed that the SWAT routine has increased students reporting, emphasized the importance of student-teacher relationships in student reports of bullying. She explained, "'Cause I feel like when they're really comfortable with a teacher, they're more apt to

come to you and tell you and ask for help. I feel like a lot of people have good relationships with the kids here.”

General education teachers also described the role that PBIS tools, such as teaching the school-wide behaviors, played in bullying prevention and intervention at Homestead. General education teachers perceived PBIS Tier 1 tools to be an effective approach to prevent and intervene with bullying for approximately 95% of the student population, while several of them acknowledged that students who bully repeatedly needed more intensive interventions.

Additionally, a theme emerged among general education teachers about school administrators using restorative practices for bullying-related behaviors. Some teachers were also trained on restorative practices and encouraged to incorporate restorative circles into their classroom instruction. One of the six general education teachers described facilitating restorative circles daily for 3-4 weeks at the start of the school year. Later on, she described facilitating these circles on an as-needed basis to build classroom community which helps to prevent bullying:

I think for me, I'm using the circle, which helps, I think, to talk about expectations, and listening to one another without judgment equally. We get to know one another, and then you have that idea that you aren't the only one in the classroom, that there's many other points of view. I think that's helpful.

**Classroom-Level Bullying Prevention and Intervention.** When general education teachers were asked to provide artifacts of bullying prevention and intervention activities they had implemented during the 2016-17 school year, four out of six general education teachers discussed implementing activities developed by the *Expect Respect* club (see Table 16). These were mainly brief videos that focused on helping students understand how to be good bystanders

and intervene with bullying. They specifically addressed the importance of not giving attention to the person who is disrespectful and emphasized the importance of students standing up in solidarity and saying “stop” to bullying. One of the teachers explained the purpose of these *Expect Respect* videos and activities, “It’s about being a bystander, or an upstander, and how you can be a good bystander, versus a not-so-great bystander, and explaining the importance of this.” Following is how she described her students’ reactions in advisory when they were asked by *Expect Respect* club to watch a video and create a mural focusing on the role of bystanders,

Yeah, I think it definitely opened up the dialogue between our advisory kids, because a lot of them don’t really know what that term means. As we discussed it, I remember them just kind of being like, ‘Oh, like yeah ...’ They could relate to that situation. They’ve all been bystanders before. They shared experiences of when they were bystanders, and even when they were good bystanders, versus not-good bystanders, when they didn’t intervene, and they kinda just watched, and let it happen.

Table 16

*General Education Teachers' Artifacts of Bullying Prevention and Intervention Activities*

Type of Activity/ Artifact	Description	General Education Teacher
A video " <i>Count on me to be a bystander</i> " created by the <i>Expect Respect</i> club	Duration of video: 3'15" Bruno Mars's song, " <i>You can count on me</i> " was played in the background. Students held up Stop signs in hallways and on the bus when they saw a student being disrespected. Two examples of being disrespected were shown in the video: (a) Two girls were laughing and pointing at another girl on the bus, (b) A boy was throwing another student's books/papers out of a locker. Students held up the Stop signs. The captions said, " <i>When you see someone being disrespected everyone should say, 'Stop.'</i> "	Jaime 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
A video about the role of bystanders created by the <i>Expect Respect</i> club	Duration of video: 1'28" An 8 <sup>th</sup> -grade student was walking through the hallway and explaining what it means to be a good bystander versus a "bad" bystander. He explained that a good bystander helps a student who is bullied in the hallway. Good bystander also shows support and cares about victims. The student further explained that a "bad" bystander cares only about himself/herself and does not take any action when someone is being bullied.	Jaime 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Creating a classroom door poster that describes the new school-wide behavior expectation "Be Safe"	As part of introducing the new school-wide expectation "Be Safe," advisory teachers and students were asked to make a poster for a classroom door. Some of the phrases and pictures included on the poster shared by this teacher included: Stand up for victims; If you don't feel safe, tell an adult – SWAT, be a bystander; "bullying" was crossed out twice.	Kathy 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
A video about the role of bystanders created by the <i>Expect Respect</i> club	Duration of video: 1'23 Several members of the <i>Expect Respect</i> club were describing what it means to be a good bystander. They emphasized the importance of not giving attention to the person who is disrespectful. The students said, "When you see someone disrespectful – don't encourage it. They're looking for attention. Intervene and invite the victim to come with you." At the end of the video, the members of the <i>Expect Respect</i> club announced that all students would be making pictures in advisory to show how to be a good bystander. One winner per grade level would be selected and the best murals were to be posted in the school cafeteria.	Abby 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade

Type of Activity/ Artifact	Description	General Education Teacher
Videos created by the <i>Expect Respect</i> club	The teacher described showing the <i>Expect Respect</i> videos with different scenarios and facilitating role-playing and discussion during a restorative circle.	Maria 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Character Trait Chart – a graphic organizer that was used to analyze book by Rob Buyea “ <i>Because of Mr. Terupt</i> ”	This teacher learned about this book project from a different school and introduced it to her grade-level team. All 7 <sup>th</sup> -grade ELA teachers assigned “ <i>Because of Mr. Terupt</i> ” book in their classes. Students read a book and used a graphic organizer to discuss how different characters demonstrate SEL qualities such as empathy, bullying prevention, emotion management, and goal setting.	Maria 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade
A “Behavior Alert” self-reflection worksheet	This teacher used the Behavior Alert worksheet when students displayed inappropriate behavior including bullying. The goal was to help the student understand the impact of his/her behavior on the class community and identify what he/she could do differently in the future.	Evelyn 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade

*Note.* SWD = students with disabilities; SWAT = Stop, Walk, and Talk; ELA = English Language Arts; SEL = social and emotional learning

Another school-wide bullying prevention activity that was initiated by the PBIS Tier 1 Team and implemented in advisory in spring 2017 focused on creating a classroom door poster describing a new school-wide expected behavior “Be Safe” intended to officially replace “Be Proud” in August 2017. Figure 17 shows a poster shared by a 6<sup>th</sup>-grade teacher and the connections that students were making between safety and bullying. The students included on the poster several positive expectations such as, “if you don’t feel safe, tell an adult,” “SWAT,” “be a bystander,” “stand up for victim,” and “feel empathy,” while “bullying” and “talking behind people’s back” were crossed out to convey that these negative behaviors result in students feeling unsafe.

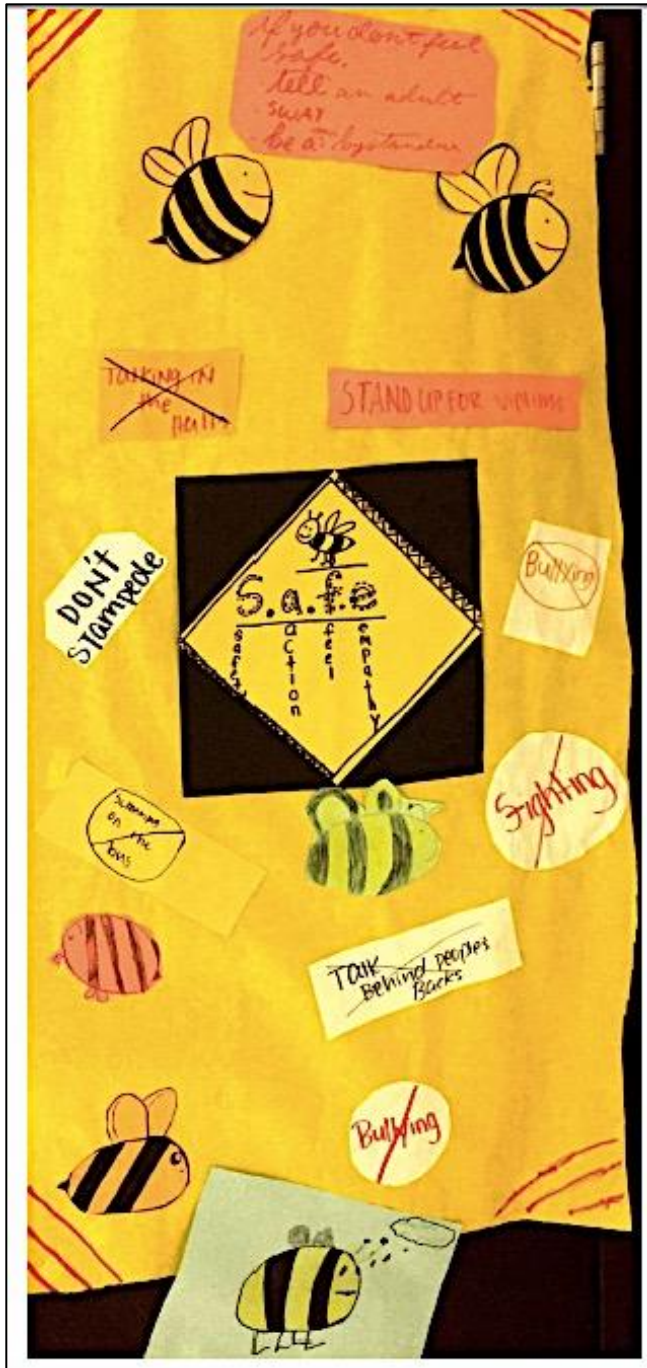


Figure 17. "Be Safe" poster on the classroom door.

Another general education teacher shared a “Behavior Alert” worksheet that she used to help students self-reflect when they engaged in bullying or other problem behaviors (see Figure 18). This general education teacher emphasized the importance of helping students understand the impact of their behavior on the class community and being able to identify more positive choices. As she stated,

I want them to recognize and own their behavior and see the impact of their choices on others. They're really short questions. They're not meant to write a ton 'cause that's not always something they want to do, but just reading the questions and maybe having an opportunity to reset, so that they can be a positive contribution to the class.

This teacher uses the self-reflection worksheet with SWD as well, but the activity is likely modified for them based on their needs. If needed, the teacher reads the questions for SWD or writes their responses if they have difficulties completing the Behavior Alert independently.

<b>BEHAVIOR ALERT</b>	Name: _____
1. <u>What</u> did you do?	
2. <u>Why</u> did you do it?	
3. <u>How</u> did your behavior change the atmosphere of the classroom (feeling)?	
4. What are 4 other things you <b>COULD</b> have done instead?	
5. <u>What</u> will you do <u>differently</u> next time?	
6. <u>Why</u> will you do things differently next time?	

Figure 18. The “Behavior Alert” worksheet.

Importantly, it appeared that the level of SWD’s understanding and engagement in bullying prevention activities implemented at the classroom level, specifically in advisory, tended to vary depending on a student’s disability. SWD were likely to be quiet and/or passive observers, or they were likely to be acting out rather than taking the activities seriously. One of the general education teachers described the participation of students with Autism and LD when her class was watching one of the *Expect Respect* videos about being a “good” bystander and

then had worked on a mural: “My student with Autism did not talk at all. He’s very quiet. I wanna say the others, one of ‘em, didn’t really take it seriously.” Another teacher described the engagement of one of her students with Autism when the advisory class had watched bullying prevention videos, “He’s usually quiet. He’ll watch and he’ll listen. He’s not one to volunteer. He’ll listen to the conversation.” She explained that this student has many social issues and requires one-on-one assistance. Furthermore, another general education teacher described the participation of SWD in advisory when creating a classroom door poster “Be Safe:”

She, I remember, was tryin’ to color some of the ones that were drawn. It was good for her to share what was the discussion, but I don’t think she probably participated. She doesn’t seem to feel that comfortable. There’s only a few times during the days she’s with a regular group.

Another general education teacher who discussed incorporating some bullying prevention activities into the ELA curriculum (e.g., reading and discussing “*Because of Mr. Terupt*” and facilitating restorative circles) shared a similar observation:

With some of the students, I may have—sometimes, the students, they would be—definitely, we’re listening, so that’s part of the circle is everyone’s listening. They’re looking at the person speaking. You would hope that they would be at least listening to what is taking place.

### **Special Education Teachers’ Experiences with Bullying Prevention and Intervention**

When discussing bullying prevention and intervention practices at Homestead School, special education teachers primarily acknowledged the different components of PBIS, specifically, teaching school-wide behavior expectations with Cool Tools. As one of them noted, “Well, I think with using PBIS, teaching the kids that respect, responsible, proud, teaching them

specific situations. We do some role play so they see what to do, what not to do.” Special education teachers also described the practice of using school gotcha tickets to positively reinforce behaviors and displaying posters with expected behaviors in various settings in the school to increase prosocial behaviors. While acknowledging the role that PBIS plays in bullying prevention and intervention at Homestead, special education teachers tended to agree that school personnel need to reteach and reward the expected behaviors as well as use the SWAT routine more consistently. One of the special education teachers conveyed a concern shared by others:

We have the signs. We have the Cool Tools. We have anything that PBIS is asking us to do for it, we have them covered. Again, it’s not necessarily brought to life as much as it should be. We have it [PBIS]. Are we using it correctly or using it as much as we should? That’s the question I have.

Special education teachers described a few additional bullying prevention and intervention practices at Homestead; however, their views on their effectiveness tended to differ across the participants. Thus, two of the five special education teachers perceived the use of ODRs to be an effective component of bullying prevention and intervention at Homestead School. They reported believing that receiving ODRs teaches students that their behavior has consequences. However, these two special education teachers also pointed out that punitive consequences tend to be less effective (e.g., students do not change their behavior after serving detention), and they identified the need for more meaningful consequences focusing on repairing relationships. As one of them shared,

I would say right now, looking at ODRs, those are quite effective. I think that they allow students to understand what they’re having consequences for, reflect on it, but I think the

follow-up and the thing that we need a little bit more is more of those peer mediation, restorative circles so that we can fully repair the situation instead of just have consequences and moving on from there.

Furthermore, two special education teachers recognized the role that *Expect Respect* and its club members play in teaching students how to identify and respond to disrespectful and bullying behavior. Yet, two other special education teachers voiced concerns about the effectiveness of the SWAT routine with adolescents. As one of them shared,

I honestly think our Stop, Walk, and Talk tends to be less effective, just because at this age, our students lack confidence in themselves. They might not be that strong of an advocate for themselves. As a bystander, [students] definitely don't feel strong enough to advocate for others just yet.

**Classroom-Level Bullying Prevention and Intervention.** Special education teachers were also asked to share at least one example of bullying prevention and intervention activities, or strategies, they had implemented at the classroom level during the 2016-17 school year. Similar to their general education counterparts, special education teachers discussed several videos and activities developed by the *Expect Respect* club, which they implemented in advisory class (see Table 17).

Table 17

*Special Education Teachers' Artifacts of Bullying Prevention and Intervention Activities*

Type of Activity/ Artifact	Description	Special Education Teacher
A Cool Tools lesson focuses on the school-wide expected behaviors, "Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe"	The teacher facilitated this Cool Tools lesson in advisory in the beginning of the year (PBIS Kick-off Days) to teach students the school-wide expected behaviors. In this lesson, "Be respectful" was defined as saying please and thank you to demonstrate appropriate good manners; using low volume level not to disturb other classes and students; listening to consider others' ideas and points of view; and being polite/using manners - treating others as you would like to be treated (the golden rule). According to this lesson, students meet the expectations for "Be Responsible" when they arrive to class on time, keep the class free from distraction, bring the appropriate materials to keep the flow of learning, and know the appropriate time to get out of their seats. "Be Safe" was defined as keeping hands and feet to self to respect everyone's personal space, property, and safety; keeping the classroom area clean to be able to move around the room safely.	Brenda 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
A lesson plan created by the <i>Expect Respect</i> Club focusing on the role of bystanders after students watched a video "The Bully" produced by Jonah Maxwell and published on YouTube	<p>Duration of video: 6'37"</p> <p>In the video, students learned about a story of a 5<sup>th</sup>-grade girl who moved to a new school and was bullied because she looked different and spoke with an accent. Throughout the video there were some explicit examples of verbal and emotional bullying at school and on the Internet and how it affects students. Students who engaged in bullying or witnessed bullying were wearing masks, which symbolized the pervasive nature of bullying. The narrator said, "If you're not part of the solution, you can still be part of the problem."</p> <p>The lesson plan developed by the <i>Expect Respect</i> club that followed the viewing of "The Bully" video included discussion questions about different forms of bullying (physical, verbal, sexual, and emotional bullying). The overarching focus was on increasing the students' awareness that the bystander intervention makes a difference. Students were also asked whether they know anyone who had been cyberbullied or had been a victim of disrespect in the past. At the end of this lesson, students were provided individual ballots and were instructed to write down some ideas for how to support students in their school, which were going to be collected and reviewed by</p>	Rene 6-8 <sup>th</sup> Grade

Type of Activity/ Artifact	Description	Special Education Teacher
	the <i>Expect Respect</i> club.	
“Think Before You Speak” visual	This teacher displayed the “Think before You Speak” visual in the classroom to remind students to use kind words and to encourage being respectful.	Jessica 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade
“What is bullying?” and “Is it Bullying?” visuals to increase the student awareness of bullying	The teacher used the visual “Is it Bullying” to help students understand the difference between conflict, joking around, and bullying. Students engaged in role-playing to identify and differentiate bullying behavior from other behaviors.	
A visual of classroom norms	The teacher facilitated an activity focusing on developing classroom norms in one of her special education classes. These norms were in addition to the school-wide expected behaviors and represented on a poster. Students shared that they were bullied in other classes and the teacher wanted to set positive expectations for how to treat one another in her classroom. She used this visual throughout the year in all of her special education classes. Some of the norms included on the poster were: “Don’t Bully,” “Be a Friend,” “Use positive words,” “Be polite to people,” and “Respect the people in the classroom.”	Emma 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade
A video “ <i>Creating a Safe School for Everyone</i> ” created by the <i>Expect Respect</i> club	Duration of video: 6’18” Members of the <i>Expect Respect</i> club were describing and role-playing the key tenets of <i>Expect Respect</i> , including the use of the SWAT and SBL. Students explained that all teachers would respond the same way when students report being disrespected. They would ask a student if he/she told the other student(s) to stop. If he/she didn’t tell the other student to stop, the teacher would practice saying “Stop” with the targeted student. The teacher would ask questions about what happened. The students explained that as soon as the teacher is able to, he/she would call in the student who was disrespectful. Students also explained that the student who engaged in disrespectful or bullying behavior may or may not be written up depending on how serious the consequences were. The teacher could give them consequences if the behavior repeats. The students were also role playing the use of the SBL. They stated that everyone from time to time could be disrespectful; however, when someone tells them to “Stop,” they expect you to stop the behavior and move on. The students explained the difference between joking around and being disrespectful to someone. They were encouraging students to use the SWAT if they feel hurt by the joke. They explained that a true friend would respect them and stop	Carly 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade

Type of Activity/ Artifact	Description	Special Education Teacher
	<p>hurtful joking around.</p> <p>The students also role-played how to be an upstander. They stated that if students observe that someone else is being disrespected, they need to tell the student to stop and invite the other student (victim) to come with them.</p> <p>At the end of the video, one of the students asked whether <i>Expect Respect</i> and the SWAT could be used only for bullying. Another student explained, “Bullying is a pattern of behaviors that happen many times.” The student further shared that the SWAT could be used any time someone feels disrespected. The student also explained that when students are using <i>Expect Respect</i>, “the situation should never get far enough to be considered bullying.” Finally, the student explained that nobody should feel awkward using the SWAT, because it is a way to stand up for oneself and their classmates. At the end, several student members of the <i>Expect Respect</i> club asked that every class develop in advisory a skit, movie, song, or dance about <i>Expect Respect</i>.</p>	

*Note.* SWD = students with disabilities; SWAT = Stop, Walk, and Talk; SBL = Stop, Breathe, and Leave

Following is how one of the special education teachers described the role the *Expect Respect* club plays in bullying prevention and intervention,

They oftentimes will make little videos. We participate—several times a year, the *Expect Respect* club will come out with advisory activities that will take place on the Monday advisory when we have about 30 minutes. We walk kids through different aspects of bullying. We’ve had them identify the difference between bullying and peer conflict. We’ve played games where we have to go all over the school and figure out these jigsaw puzzles based on what’s bullying and what’s peer conflict. The *Expect Respect* club has done a lot. We still work on establishing an active bystander. They usually share the videos through our Google Drive. Then they have it scheduled on certain days that we’re supposed to accomplish these tasks by and accomplish these lessons and bring that to the forefront of our advisory talk.

One of the videos developed by the *Expect Respect* club entitled, “*Creating a Safe School for Everyone*” explained the key components of *Expect Respect*. In this video, members of the *Expect Respect* club emphasized that everyone has the right to be respected while at school; they then modeled how to use the SWAT routine when someone is disrespectful to them. They were supposed to hold up a hand and say, “Stop,” with a confident voice. If the behavior did not stop, the student who was being disrespected was supposed to walk away and talk to a trusted teacher or another adult at school. In this video, students also demonstrated the steps that the person who is asked to stop the disrespectful behavior needs to follow, which included SBL the situation. One of the students in this video defined bullying as “a pattern of behaviors that happen many times,” and further explained that the SWAT routine could be used to stop

bullying. However, the SWAT routine can be used any time someone feels disrespected and that “situations should never get far enough to be considered bullying.”

Another classroom bullying prevention and intervention activity implemented in advisory by another special education teacher was a bullying lesson created by the *Expect Respect* club that included viewing a video *The Bully* produced by Jonah Maxwell followed by a discussion about the difference between bullying and peer conflict, different types of bullying, and the role of bystander (see Table 17). The overarching focus was on conveying that bystander intervention makes a difference.

Another special education teacher shared a Cool Tools lesson that all teachers were asked to teach at the start of the year in advisory and encouraged to review it multiple times during the school year. Although bullying behavior was not mentioned in this lesson, the special education teacher noted that students were able to make connections between respectful behavior and bullying. In this lesson, “Be Respectful” was defined as saying “please” and “thank you” to demonstrate appropriate good manners; using low volume level not to disturb other classes and students; listening to consider others’ ideas and points of view; and being polite/using manners - treating others as you would like to be treated (the golden rule).

Yet another special education teacher shared a visual entitled, “Think Before You Speak” that she displayed in her classroom in the beginning of the year and referred to it to remind students to use kind words and to encourage their respectful behavior. She explained,

‘Stop and think about what you're saying first.’ We use that a lot to focus more on kind words and how to—I always say, ‘You don't have to like everybody. You need to be tolerant. You need to be respectful.’

This special education teacher also described another bullying prevention activity she implemented in advisory that focused on increasing the students' awareness of bullying. For this activity she used two visuals, entitled "What is Bullying?" and "Is it Bullying?" Students were role-playing and had practiced identifying bullying.

I do something with scenarios. 'Is it bullying? How can you tell if somebody's being bullied?' We do kinda what joking around is. We do actually some role—we talk about it first. Do a little role-play. Then we do asking the question, 'Is someone being mean on purpose? How can you tell? What's the reaction? Does it happen more than once? Is it happening often?'

Another special education teacher described a bullying prevention activity that involved creating a poster with classroom norms to create a positive and safe community for all students (see Figure 19). She facilitated this activity in a humanities special education class at the start of the year. One of the norms depicted on the poster stated, "Don't Bully. Be a Friend;" "Use positive words;" "Be polite to people;" "Respect the people in the classroom." The special education teacher had used this visual as a teaching tool throughout the year to remind students of the classroom norms, specifically, in problem situations.

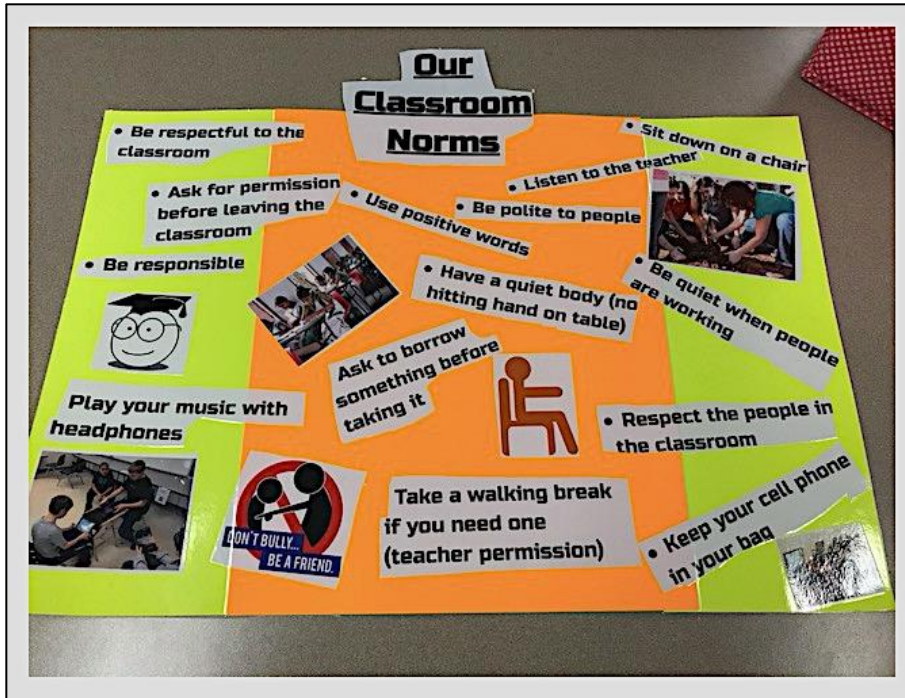


Figure 19. "Our Classroom Norms" poster.

### Related Services Personnel's Experiences with Bullying Prevention and Intervention

Similarly to other school personnel, the related services personnel tended to agree that activities developed by the *Expect Respect* club were one of the main components of bullying prevention and intervention at Homestead. As one of them noted,

The sponsors as well as the club pushes out activities for advisories to do, and it might be like, 'Watch this video and discuss.' Facilitate these role-plays and discuss. Just to get kids talking about it. With that club, I would say that's the main way I think that the school tries to prevent and intervene, by educating and then giving some additional practice to review the expectations.

All three related services providers described challenges using the SWAT routine with adolescents and questioned its effectiveness as a tool to use to respond to bullying. As one of them noted, "The stop, the SWAT, just in general, the kids make fun of it at this point, they're

not gonna buy into it. If someone tries to do that they're probably opening it up for getting bullied more." It is more likely to work when students use it in the classroom in the presence of the teacher than in less structured settings.

I guess it depends on where it's occurring. If it's happening within a classroom, a student just loudly saying, 'Knock it off.' Or 'Leave me alone,' is enough to stop the class. The teacher now has to investigate and figure out what's going on. That, in turn, fixes it. It's also the student wasn't a snitch, it was just they were so frustrated that they ended up loudly verbalizing, 'Leave me alone.'

Similarly, one of the social workers noted that some students think the SWAT routine is juvenile, You asked certain students or when you talk to certain students about this, it seems as though some think it's very juvenile or elementary and not appropriate to where they're at. 'Oh, if I do that, they're just gonna laugh at me,' or, 'If I do that, they're just going to.' We hear a lot of 'snitches get stitches' or whatever. No one wants to be the person that tattles.

Related services personnel discussed some additional bullying prevention and intervention practices at Homestead School; however, their perspectives on the effectiveness tended to vary. One of them acknowledged that *Expect Respect* is effective in providing the staff and students with common language. On the other hand, another related service provider felt that the most effective approach to bullying prevention and intervention is empowering bystanders. He shared,

I think the biggest piece that I found effective was getting the kids that are perceived as cool, to start seeing after some of the kids that were weaker. (...) The second they say,

‘Hey, this kid’s okay, leave ’im alone,’ that’s where those students were then left alone so far, for most of the year.

Finally, the third member of the related services providers group shared that restorative justice practices had been used to intervene with bullying and restorative circles were among some of the most effective bullying prevention and intervention practices at Homestead School. She noted,

Administration has done a number of them. They've been a big part of it. The counseling staff, social workers, psych, we've done it. Teachers are even learning that whole process. The goal is for any certified or any adult in the building should be able to hold one and do one of these circles. Right now, primarily, it's been the counseling staff, administration, and some teachers.

### **School Administrators’ Experiences with Bullying Prevention and Intervention**

All three school administrators agreed that *Expect Respect* and PBIS were the main components of bullying prevention and intervention at Homestead School and both focused on teaching prosocial behaviors. This school administrator’s description exemplifies their shared belief:

Prevention is definitely through our Expect Respect club and PBIS, just through Tier 1, making sure that we’re clear in setting the expectations of behavior within the different environments, and then also within the school just how to treat each other. Our response is, obviously, within that, too, in our Tier 1 response is from a position of reteaching and understanding that students need to be retaught a behavior multiple times before we can expect for it to be an adopted habit.

One of them further elaborated on the focus on prosocial behaviors:

We don't really ever refer to anything as bullying. Even with *Expect Respect*, we don't use the term *bullying*. It's always if you've been or have felt disrespected. Then we turn around to prosocial behaviors, what we can expect to see.

They also pointed out the importance of the visuals throughout the building focusing on respectful behavior and how to treat others. Similarly to other school personnel, the administrators recognized the role the *Expect Respect* club plays in developing positive school culture and climate and increasing the bullying awareness of both students and staff. In addition to developing bullying prevention activities for advisory, the members of the *Expect Respect* club present information about bullying during staff meetings.

These school administrators expressed that working with students on being upstanders is one of the most important and effective approaches to bullying prevention and intervention. One of them noted,

Then I really feel like some of the instances that I've had, too, engaging other people that are around and helping to prepare them for if a situation like this were to occur again, here are my expectations for how I would expect you to respond. Here are some tools for if you're observing some other bullying behavior, somebody in a situation that seems unsafe, what you can do.

He further recalled two different situations when he met with a group of students riding the same bus and said to them,

'You need to look around the table. You all need to understand that I'm not telling just one of you this. Everybody has this responsibility. (...) What you cannot do is you can't wait for somebody else to be the first person to respond. If all of you are waiting for

somebody else to be the first person to respond, nobody's going to respond. You have to know that this is the right thing to do.'

Speaking about the effectiveness of the different components of bullying prevention and intervention at Homestead, these school administrators indicated that the SWAT routine offers a consistent approach for the students to respond to disrespectful or bullying behavior; however, they all agreed that adolescents consider it juvenile and are less receptive to using it in middle school than elementary school. This school administrator captured what others raised as a concern as well:

SWAT, I think our students have struggled with feeling like it's childish or baby, just not at their maturity level. That's been a struggle for us. Trying to come up with is there something else that can be done. Is it a different hand signal? Is it different words, something, but some type of indicator for students to remove themselves from a situation.

There was a common theme among school administrators with respect to improving bullying prevention and intervention for SWD included in general education classrooms. They reported that their peers without disabilities need more disability awareness to better understand SWD and the challenges they may be experiencing in classrooms.

I think often there's—a huge piece goes back to empathy in putting yourself in somebody's shoes. I think the more awareness and understanding that we can provide students with, of disabilities, walking in that person's shoes, understanding what they're experiencing or going through, hopefully is helpful.

Furthermore, school administrators conveyed the importance of educating general education teachers about how disability might affect students' involvement in bullying. They communicated that it is important to help teachers understand that bullying behavior might be

related to a student's disability, which might then require an individualized response without letting SWD "get away with it."

Again, trying to protect the privacy and confidentiality of those students and not divulging too much information, but giving enough information to staff so that they understand this is a part of their disability and this is how we respond to that student.

Also, not having staff think that they get away with it because they have a disability. I think sometimes that's a perception, too. Well, you just say that they're special ed., so they get away with that behavior. No, but we have to respond a little bit differently because it's part of the disability.

One of these school administrators pointed out that disability awareness is an ongoing area for improvement, specifically with respect to students with EBD. She explained that these students sometimes engage impulsively in negative interactions and teachers need to understand that this is not always a sign of bullying, but rather this behavior is connected to their disabilities. This school administrator shared that there may be some insecurity among general education teachers regarding "how to respond to a student that maybe is impulsive or has some emotional concerns and they do something that could be perceived as bullying and then staff not knowing how to interact."

Furthermore, there was variability across the school administrators with respect to additional bullying prevention and intervention practices at Homestead they perceived to be effective, which included SAIG, restorative circles, and social thinking class. Thus, one of the administrators discussed the benefit of having SAIGs to help students develop prosocial behaviors. According to her, a small-group setting in which students built closer relationships with adults was an effective approach to bullying prevention and intervention; however, they

have not yet found a specific curriculum that would be effective for all students. Another administrator pointed out that students who engaged in bullying behavior typically had a history of participating in Tier 2 interventions such as CICO and SAIG; however, they would not have necessarily participated in these interventions due to bullying but most likely other similar problem behaviors identified by the Tier 2 Team.

One of the school administrators discussed utilizing restorative circles when intervening with bullying to help students reflect on the harm they had done and how it affected others, including their peers, friends, teachers, and parents. He expressed that restorative circles tended to be an effective intervention for bullying when students have accepted responsibility for their actions.

As I said before, a lot of my decision making is influenced—or the decision to bring students together is based on whether I feel that the aggressor has done reflection and is in a position to where they're willing to accept responsibility, because there's continued hurt or damage that can be made if that student isn't in that correct mindset. I have to have the confidence that they're ready and willing to participate in a constructive conversation and willing to accept responsibility for things.

Furthermore, one of the administrators discussed a social thinking class available at Homestead School to SWD, as one of the effective components of bullying prevention and intervention for SWD who have difficulty with social awareness and perspective taking. She noted that the basis for this class is research on social thinking (Crooke & Winner, 2016).

### **Summary of the Main Themes**

A recurring theme shared across all four types of school personnel was that *Expect Respect* and its club members played a key role in developing bullying prevention activities that

were implemented a few times a year in advisory. These bullying prevention activities focused on reinforcing school-wide behaviors, specifically being respectful, understanding how to respond to disrespectful behavior, and the role of bystanders in preventing or intervening with disrespectful or bullying behavior. A consistent theme emerged among general educators who noted that SWD were likely to have difficulty participating actively in the *Expect Respect* bullying prevention activities implemented in advisory.

Overall, there appeared to be a shared belief among the school personnel that empowering bystanders is the key component of *Expect Respect* and bullying prevention and intervention efforts at Homestead. The SWAT routine was designed to teach potential victims and bystanders how to respond to disrespectful behavior, yet adolescents perceived it as juvenile and were less likely to use it. Several school personnel also acknowledged that PBIS offered Cool Tools, gotcha tickets, and visuals that were used to teach and reinforce school-wide prosocial behaviors. Some school personnel had been exposed to restorative practices, and school administrators reported implementing restorative circles to intervene with behavior problems including bullying.

A few areas for improvement in bullying prevention and intervention were also identified, but they tended to vary across the different types of school personnel. General educators recognized that more intensive interventions were needed for students who were likely to bully repeatedly and were not responding to PBIS Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. Special education teachers revealed that staff needed to be more consistent with implementing PBIS, and school-wide expected behaviors needed to be retaught more consistently and rewarded with gotcha tickets. Related services personnel reported that more frequent and intensive interventions implemented at the classroom level, such as *Second Step* or restorative circles,

were needed to prevent and intervene with bullying. Among school administrators there was a shared understanding that in order to prevent bullying of SWD included in general education classrooms, peers without disabilities needed more disability awareness to develop empathy for their experiences. Although the remaining groups of school professionals (units of analysis) did not universally discuss the need for disability awareness to prevent bullying of SWD, there were at least one to two participants within each group who voiced a similar concern. Furthermore, school administrators expressed that teachers also needed more disability awareness to understand how different disabilities (e.g., EBD) could affect the student's involvement in bullying.

#### **Research Question Four. Intensifying Prevention and Intervention for SWD within a Multi-Tiered Framework**

In the previous section, I described the perspectives of different school personnel on bullying prevention and intervention practices available to students at Homestead. To gain deeper insight into how different school personnel likely prevent and intervene with bullying of SWD in the middle school within a multi-tiered framework, the participants were asked to discuss three different hypothetical case studies (see Table 18). In this section, I describe the key components of bullying prevention and intervention school personnel would likely utilize with three students with high-functioning disabilities such as HF-Autism, EBD, and LD, involved in bullying victimization and perpetration. I will point out similarities and differences within and across the different units of analysis and pay close attention to any evidence for intensifying bullying prevention and intervention for SWD. Figures 20-23 highlight the key bullying prevention and intervention practices that each group of school personnel identified as appropriate to utilize with SWD sharing a profile similar to the hypothetical cases.

Table 18

*Hypothetical Bullying Cases Involving SWD*

Hypothetical Case 1 Student with HF-Autism	Hypothetical Case 2 Student with EBD	Hypothetical Case 3 Student with LD
Luis is a 7 <sup>th</sup> grader with HF-Autism who participates in general education classes with some special education push-in support. He has several narrow interests that make him appear socially naïve for his age. Within the classroom setting, Luis is usually the last one to be picked as a partner for group discussions and projects. He tends to sit by himself in the school cafeteria. Luis has difficulty reading social cues and understanding when he is being teased. A student has just reported to you that two boys have been making fun of Luis and are calling him derogatory names in a P.E. locker room. These two students tease Luis almost every day.	Dwayne is an 8 <sup>th</sup> grader who receives special education under the primary eligibility of EBD due to a high level of aggression. He is known to have been bullied on and off throughout middle school by some older boys and his sibling. A few bus riders reported that Dwayne has been threatening to beat up a 6 <sup>th</sup> -grade boy on the bus, and this has been going on for several weeks.	Skylar is a 7 <sup>th</sup> grader with LD and she receives special education support in reading and math. Socially, Skylar has a history of difficulties developing and maintaining positive peer relations. She wants to be popular with a “cool” group of girls. You just found that one of these “cool” girls made humiliating posts about Skylar on social media. Reluctantly, Skylar has also revealed that this girl has been pressuring Skylar to share her Instagram password and threatening to exclude her from the group if she doesn’t comply.

*Note.* HF-Autism = high functioning Autism; EBD = emotional behavioral disability; LD = learning disability; P.E. = physical education

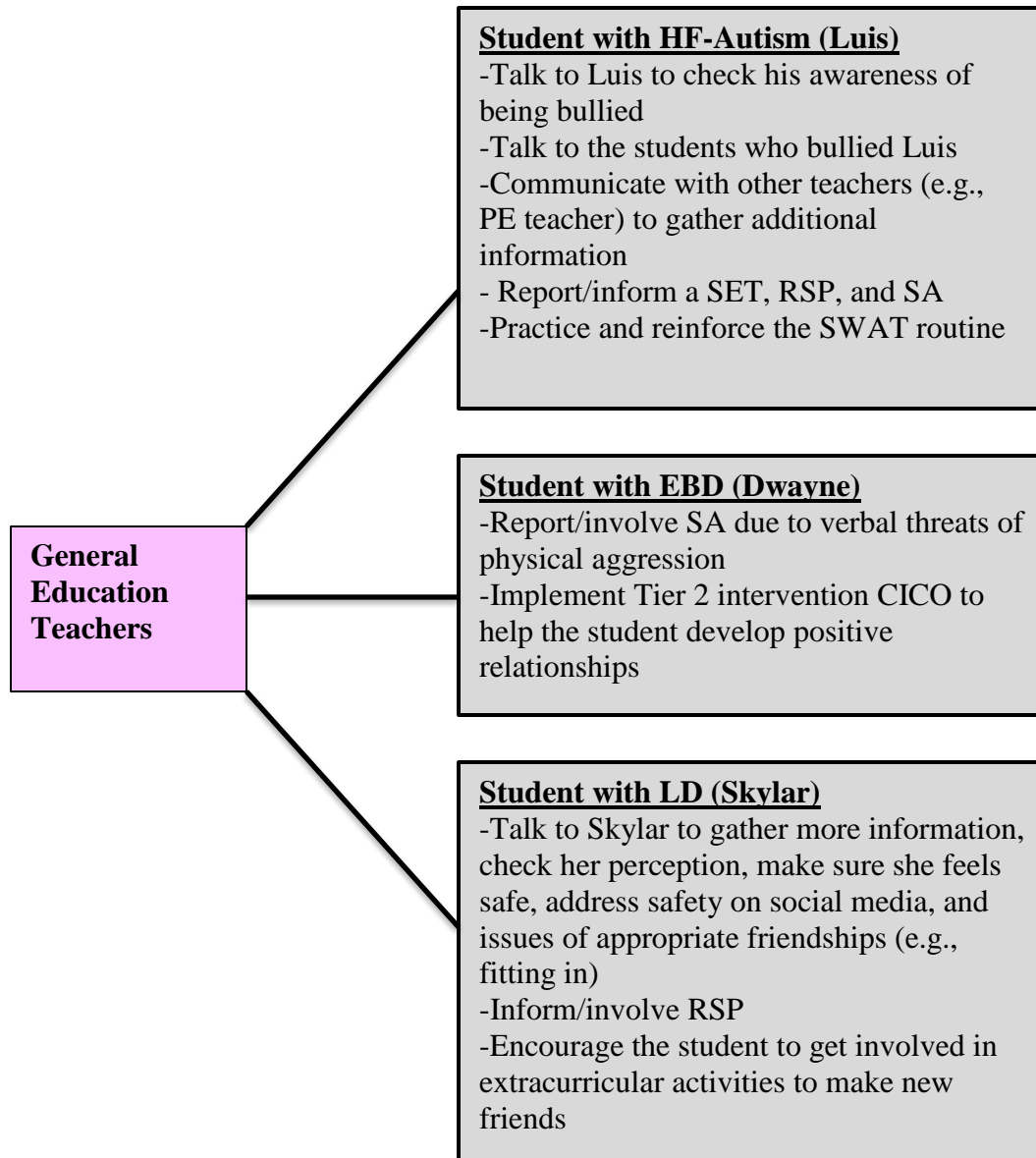


Figure 20. Similarities in general education teachers' bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.

SET = special education teachers; RSP = related services personnel; SA = school administrators; HF-Autism = high functioning Autism; EBD = emotional behavioral disability; LD = learning disability; PE = physical education; SWAT = Stop, Walk, and Talk; CICO = Check In Check Out

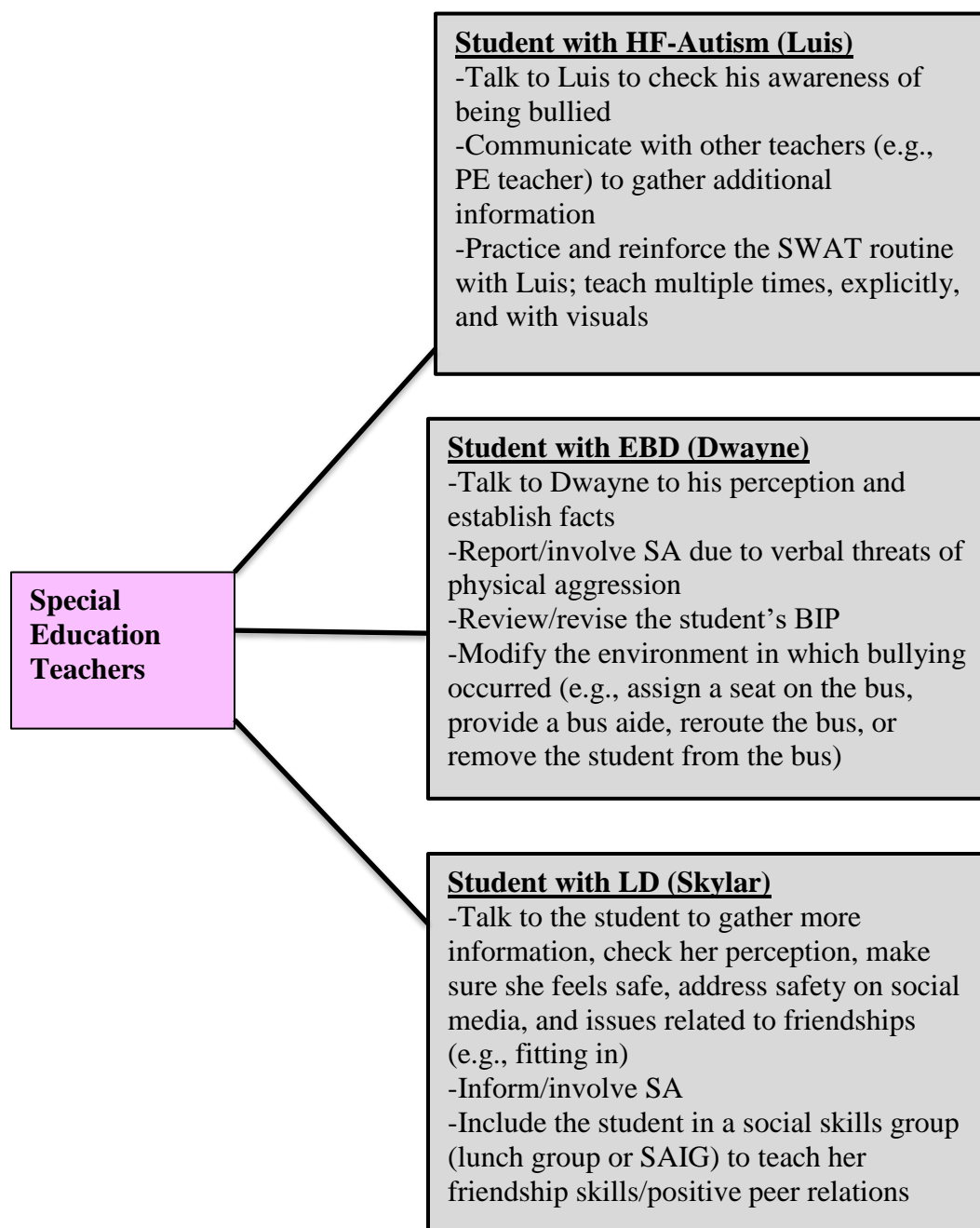


Figure 21. Similarities in special education teachers' bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.

SET = special education teachers; RSP = related services personnel; SA = school administrators; HF-Autism = high functioning Autism; EBD = emotional behavioral disability; LD = learning disability; PE = physical education; SWAT = Stop, Walk and Talk; BIP = behavior intervention plan; SAIG = social academic instructional group

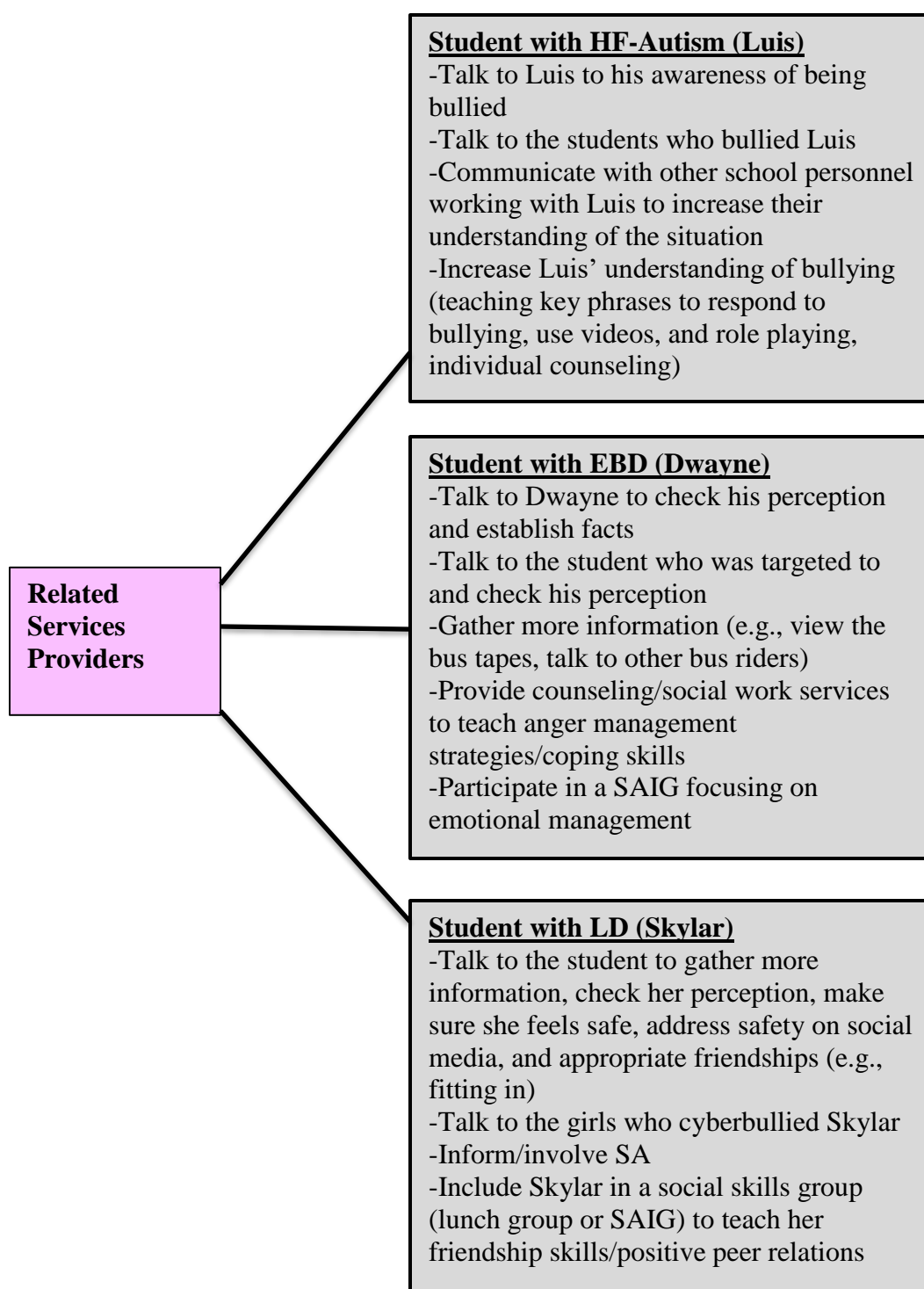


Figure 22. Similarities in related services school personnel's bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.

SA = school administrators; HF-Autism = high functioning Autism; EBD = emotional behavioral disability; LD = learning disability; SAIG = social academic instructional group

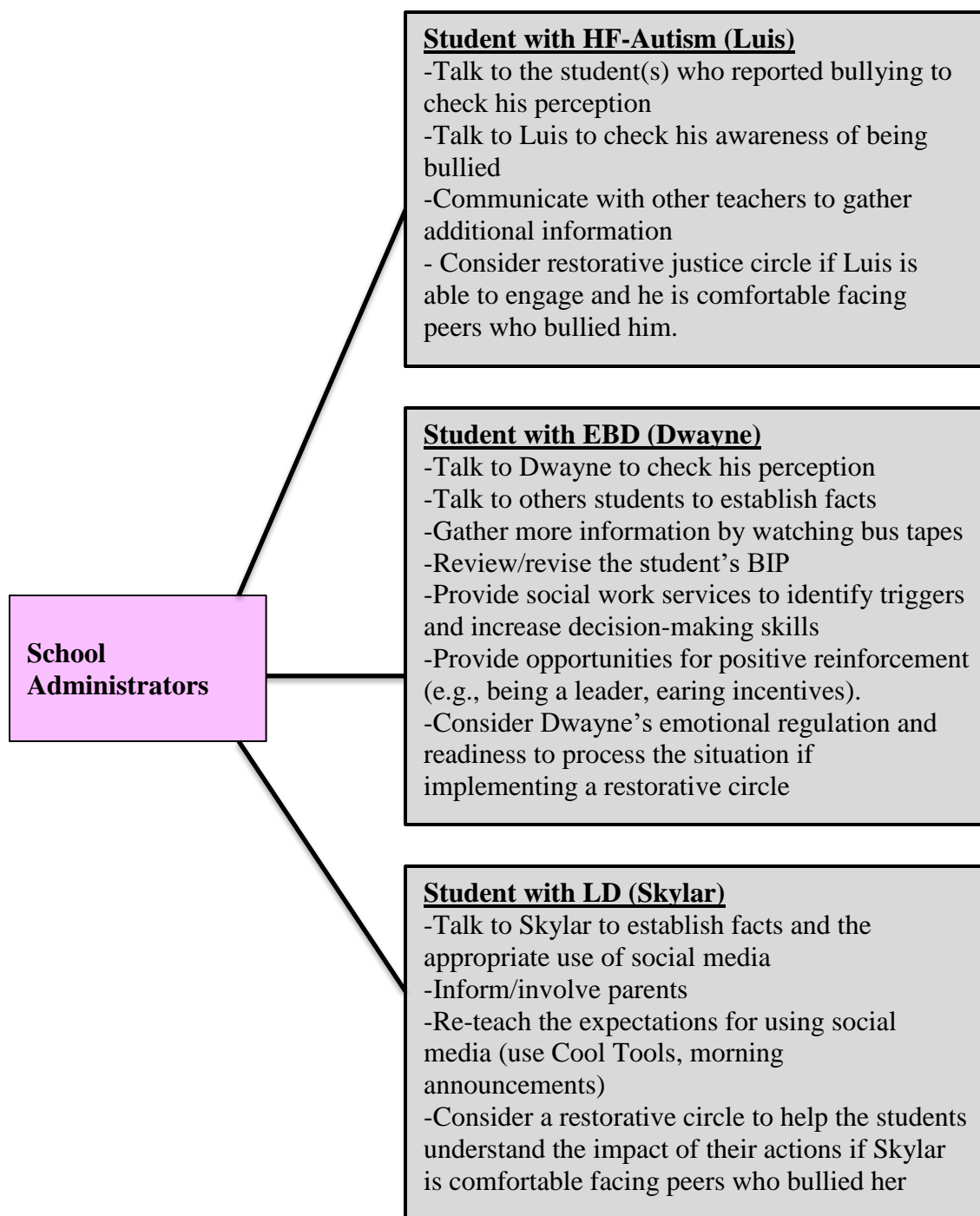


Figure 23. Similarities in school administrators' bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.

HF-Autism = high functioning Autism; EBD = emotional behavioral disability; LD = learning disability;  
PE = physical education; BIP = behavior intervention plan

## General Education Teachers Intervening with SWD

**Student with HF-Autism (Luis).** All general education teachers indicated that as part of their response to bullying of a student with HF-Autism, they would want to find out the student's perception of the situation. They would also talk to the students who engaged in the bullying behavior to determine if they had an intent to hurt the student with HF-Autism. One of the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade teachers captured the perspective shared by others: "I would talk to the individuals involved. Again, set and explain behavior expectations, trying to use that PBIS language, so that's common between all our classes." Additionally, these general education teachers would communicate with other teachers to get additional information. They would also report the incident to the special education teacher, social worker, and/or administration. All teachers noted that they would practice the SWAT routine and shared a belief that students with Autism tend to follow the prescribed steps of the SWAT. One of the teachers acknowledged that students with HF-Autism may need multiple opportunities to practice the SWAT routine.

I think the best thing would be the SWAT strategy that *Expect Respect* teaches, which is to stop—tell the people who are bullying you to stop, walk away, and talk to an adult.

There's really no room for it to continue, if the student's using that. I would have them practice it with me, practice it maybe with a peer so that they have experience using that language, and it's a little bit easier for them.

**Differences.** Only two of the six general education teachers would consider completing an ODR in this bullying situation. "I would probably write something up that said, 'I'm made aware of the situation. I've had a discussion with the students. I'm requesting follow-up from your office,'" one of them stated. Furthermore, two of the six general education teachers stated that the student with HF-Autism could join one of the social skills group facilitated by social

workers to develop his friendship skills. Given the availability of the social thinking class at Homestead School, two teachers suggested that this class would provide the student with HF-Autism with instruction on how to read social cues, make conversations, and understand bullying. One of the teachers honed in on the importance of assisting students with picking partners to avoid the exclusion of SWD in the classroom. To prevent bullying of the student with HF-Autism and foster empathy, this teacher also said that she would incorporate restorative circles into her instruction from the beginning of the year. The same teacher noted that bullying prevention for SWD could be fostered through reading books that increase disability awareness such as *The Wonder* by R. J. Palacio and *Out of My Mind* by Sharon M. Draper.

**Student with EBD (Dwayne).** When general education teachers discussed their response to the hypothetical bullying scenario involving a student with EBD, they conveyed a sense of urgency to report the incident immediately to school administrators and ask them to respond because the student made verbal threats of physical aggression. With respect to specific interventions, the teachers tended to endorse CICO as the appropriate intervention for a student with EBD who engages in bullying behavior. They reported that this intervention would provide the student with more monitoring and opportunities to build a positive relationship with an adult at school.

**Differences.** Only two of the six teachers noted that the student with EBD would likely need some instruction in emotional management and problem solving, and he could join a SAIG to develop these skills. One of the teachers voiced a concern that school administrators would likely explain and justify the bullying behavior of the student with EBD to be part of his/her disability, and she noted,

We hear that a lot with 'it's in their IEP.' Basically, they're kind of allowed to do it,

which I know it's hard for us because kids get sometimes different treatment. It's hard because you know he has a disability, but then he's threatening kids. I know that they wouldn't do anything unless he physically did do something to the boys.

**Student with LD (Skylar).** All general education teachers would likely respond to the incident involving a student with LD being a recipient of social exclusion and cyberbullying by gaining her perspective and gathering more information from her. All reported that it would be important to talk directly to the student about cyberbullying and safety on social media (e.g., the risk of sharing passwords). Although all general education teachers expressed that they would talk to the student directly, they also mentioned involving one of the related services providers to address the student's difficulties in making positive friendships. As one of them noted, "Our social workers do lunch groups, and they'll pull kids for—and encourage them to try to make plans outside of school." Additionally, to prevent and intervene with bullying, the general education teachers stressed the importance of getting the student involved in some extracurricular activities at school (e.g., the crochet club or Best Friends Forever) to establish some positive peer relations.

**Differences.** Fewer general education teachers pointed out that restorative circles could be considered in this case, and one of them described this in more detail:

If this was my class of students, and I found out about this, I may try to use the circle, again, to speak with hypothetical questions, issues, but not this specific one. Like, how do you feel when someone posts something that you are not proud of? Just have the kids all go around—I think kids will learn more from hearing their peers speak about how it makes them feel than it would if I were to tell them.

Furthermore, one of the general education teachers noted that a student with LD who struggled with peer interactions and was being cyberbullied could benefit from attending a social thinking class, a special education elective available to SWD at Homestead. They also reported that she might benefit from the CICO intervention to increase positive contact with adults. Finally, one general education teacher described wanting to consult with the *Expect Respect* sponsor to identify appropriate resources (e.g., videos and articles) about bullying on social media to share with the student. Given the student's learning disability, this teacher would ensure that these resources were at her reading level.

### **Special Education Teachers Intervening with SWD**

**Student with HF-Autism (Luis).** Special education teachers reported that a weakness in social awareness of the student with HF-Autism could likely affect his awareness of the bullying situation. Thus, they reported that it would be important to more closely examine the victimized student's perception and determine whether the student was aware of being bullied. Similar to general education teachers, several special education teachers agreed that the SWAT routine was an effective approach to preventing and intervening with bullying of students with Autism; however, these students need more opportunities to practice and use modified visuals. One special education teacher described in more detail how she would practice the SWAT routine with this student:

I've had a lot of success with students with high functioning autism, basically just teaching them rules. If someone is saying something to you that you don't like, the rule is that you tell them to stop, and then you walk away from them. Practice with them.

**Differences.** Two of the special education teachers noted that first it would be important to talk with the peers who were bullying the student with HF-Autism to check their perception of

the situation. While all special education teachers appeared comfortable responding to the reported bullying and gathering additional information, two of them said they would likely inform and involve a social worker. As one of the teachers noted, “I feel comfortable having those conversations with the kids, but I also know I’m not the expert in finessing that situation and getting all the background, working with them through that.” Two of them also mentioned involving school administrators when responding to the bullying incident.

There were several other ideas described for preventing and intervening with bullying of a student with Luis’ profile. These suggested strategies varied across the different special education teachers, such as using social stories to help the student to learn to read social cues, using Cool Tools to reteach the expected behaviors on a regular basis, asking the student to CICO to monitor the student’s self-regulation in different classes, attending a social thinking class, changing for P.E. in the restroom rather than in the locker room, having an extended passing period and walking to gym directly, facilitating a restorative circle, displaying the behavior matrix on the student’s locker, and finding an alternative location to get ready for P.E.

**Student with EBD (Dwayne).** Special education teachers indicated they would likely talk to the student with EBD who engaged in the bullying behavior to examine his perception and make him aware of the seriousness of his actions. Similar to their general education counterparts, special education teachers also conveyed the importance of reporting the incident to school administrators, because the student had made verbal threats of physical aggression. As one of them noted,

Just try to establish the facts of what’s happening with that. After that, I’d probably go to administration just because threatening to beat someone up is pretty serious, and I’d definitely want their support in deciding the next steps to take from that.

With respect to specific interventions, these special education teachers shared that every student with EBD has a BIP at Homestead School. Thus, it would be important to review the student's BIP and revise it, if needed. Additionally, given that bullying occurred on the school bus in this hypothetical case, special education teachers identified several suggestions for modifying the environment, including changing or assigning a seat for the student, providing a teacher aide on the bus, or rerouting the bus. One of them also mentioned removing the student from the bus to ensure everyone's safety.

**Differences.** Only two of the special education teachers discussed providing the student with some tools he could use on the bus to regulate emotions, such as playing a game on his phone, using a stress ball, or listening to music. Two of them mentioned using the SWAT routine with the student, joining a SAIG group, or increasing social work services that focused on self-regulation and anger management. One of the teachers indicated that she would want to review the ODR data to determine the student's main problem behaviors. The student could be referred to a Tier 2 Team and join CICO and a SAIG. Also, one of the special education teachers mentioned implementing a restorative circle if the student with EBD was ready to reflect on how his actions affected other people.

**Student with LD (Skylar).** In the hypothetical case involving a student with LD who had been cyberbullied, similarly to general education teachers, special education teachers felt it would be important to establish the facts, make sure that the student was safe, and help the student identify positive peer relations and friendships. To help the student understand the breakdown in her friendships, one of the special education teachers would say to her,

'Just because you wanna be friends with someone, they shouldn't be asking you for these things.' Kinda just play it that way. 'When you're friends with somebody, yes, you trust

them. They trust you. They would never ask you for something as private as your passwords. They would never post things about you.’

Additionally, special education teachers shared that they would likely involve school administrators, specifically, to determine on which technology devices cyberbullying occurred (school vs. home). Additionally, they suggested that the student could join a Tier 2 intervention such as SAIG focusing on social skills or attend one of the small groups focusing on positive peer relations facilitated by related services personnel. Special education teachers emphasized the importance of explicitly teaching the student friendship skills.

***Differences.*** Two of the special education teachers also stressed the importance of educating parents about cyberbullying. Other ideas for bullying prevention and intervention that varied across the different special education teachers. This included facilitating a few whole-class lessons on cyberbullying to increase the students’ understanding of cyberbullying, asking a police liaison to discuss cyberbullying and online safety (e.g., sharing passwords), and implementing a restorative circle.

### **Related Services Personnel Intervening with SWD**

**Student with HF-Autism (Luis).** Related services personnel shared that they would talk to the student to check his awareness of the situation. They would also gather additional information from peers who had allegedly bullied the student with HF-Autism. As with other school personnel, they would communicate with teachers and team members who had been working with the student to increase his awareness of the situation. When describing bullying prevention and intervention for the student with HF-Autism, related services providers acknowledged the importance of increasing his understanding of bullying and disrespectful

behavior. For instance, one of them described teaching the student a few phrases he could say to his peers when they picked on him:

If he's able to understand that it is a bullying situation, it's asking the boys to stop. 'I don't like that. Leave me alone.' Finding some way to try to at least initially verbally advocate for himself. Typically, if you can give them a couple key phrases that sound socially appropriate, that may be a good way to start so they understand what they're doing, what he doesn't like.

Related services providers also discussed role playing with the student different scenarios to increase his awareness and help him to say "stop" to students who bully him, as well as using videos and skits.

***Differences.*** The related services providers' views on utilizing the SWAT routine to prevent and intervene with the student with HF-Autism varied. One of them noted, "You could attempt to do the Stop, Walk, and Talk; however, it may or may not work, depending on which kids are bothering him." On the contrary, another related services personnel stated, "Regardless of his diagnosis, I would think he'd still be able to utilize these strategies or skills to tell the student to stop, walk away, and report it to a teacher." Additionally, one of the related services providers described using PBIS gotcha tickets to reinforce the student with HF-Autism for responding to disrespectful behavior with the SWAT method:

Perhaps it's also rewarding Luis's behavior for how he responds to any of this type of disrespect or bullying that he experiences. When he's using the SWAT method, maybe I would be sure to reward him for that to hopefully increase the likelihood that he would do it. That's using something that we have available to us on the system level.

She also suggested that his teachers use PBIS gotcha tickets to reinforce respectful behavior more frequently in the classroom to provide peer-to-peer modeling. Finally, one of them stated that restorative circles would also be an appropriate approach to intervening in this situation and described the process:

With the restorative circle we have all the participants sit down together. Those who have felt they've been bullied, and those who have been the bullies. Usually, the students that feel that they've been bullied are given an opportunity to share their feelings, what happened, their feelings, and just how it affected them. The other students are listening. Then they're asked to respond. Now, sometimes it's felt by the other students that, 'Well, I didn't mean it that way,' or, 'I didn't intend to mean it that way.' A kid that's usually got some—have some really strong social skills will probably automatically say, 'I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings,' or, 'I didn't mean to do that.' Then we work it out where we work on a plan for the future. We get the problem presented, we get feelings dealt with. Then we work on a future plan. That's the whole process.

**Student with EBD (Dwayne).** All three related services personnel expressed that they would meet with the student with EBD who displayed the bullying behavior toward a younger student on the bus to examine his perception. They would want to find out what led him to threaten the boy, his motivation, and how his behavior was related to his being a victim of bullying in the past. They would try to help the student with EBD reflect by discussing the consequences of his actions and identifying other options. Since the student engaged in bullying on the bus, they indicated that it would be important to view the bus tapes to get a better understanding of the situation. The related services personnel also mentioned that they would like to talk with the boy targeted by the student with EBD to get his perception of what

happened. Furthermore, they acknowledged that to prevent and intervene, the student with EBD would need to learn anger management strategies, coping skills, and replacement behaviors. They noted that most likely a student with an EBD profile would already be receiving counseling or social work services to develop and practice coping strategies. They indicated that this student could join a SAIG focusing on emotion regulation and management, facilitated by one related services personnel and co-taught with a teacher.

***Differences.*** One of the social workers mentioned that she would observe the involved students in the classroom prior to talking to the student with EBD. Another related services provider mentioned making the school administrators aware of the situation. One of them reported that after practicing some anger management strategies and coping skills, he would also consider implementing a restorative circle “to help everyone understand where everyone’s coming from.” Another related services provider also mentioned using CICO and revising the student’s BIP.

**Student with LD (Skylar).** Related services personnel’s responses to the hypothetical case involving a girl with LD was similar to the approach discussed by general education teachers and special education teachers. They would want to find out the student’s perception, establish any evidence of cyberbullying, make sure that the student was safe, and discuss her friendship difficulties (e.g., fitting in). In addition, the related services personnel would approach the girls who had cyberbullied Skylar and gather information from them. One social worker’s description exemplified their response:

I’m going to be a detective, and I’m going to try to get as much information from Skylar as possible as to what’s happening. Does she have some other verifications of some things? Can she show me some posts? Can she show me some things? My next step is I

do need to let administration know that this is a complaint, a possible complaint. The follow-up would be with the other girl that's being a mean girl. The entire process would be why. Did you realize the appropriateness or inappropriateness of this?

Furthermore, since this case involved cyberbullying, related services personnel reported that they needed to involve school administrators to determine the next steps. As part of bullying prevention and intervention, all related services providers suggested that a student with Skylar's profile would benefit from joining a friendship/social skills group. She would need to increase her social awareness, social confidence, basic friendships skills, and safety on social media. This instruction and support could be provided during a lunch social skills group or in a SAIG focusing on making and keeping friends.

***Differences.*** Only one of the related service providers discussed informing parents following the report of the student with LD being cyberbullied. The student's parents would need to consider setting some rules regarding the use of social media. One of the social workers perceived this case to be more complex because it involved cyberbullying: "I feel like there's so many more layers to this one." One of them pointed out that using the SWAT routine would be challenging (e.g., saying "stop" to the student, walking away, and talking) given that cyberbullying typically occurs outside of school. The same related service provider also noted that a restorative circle could be considered; however, in some situations bringing all students together could empower peers who had bullied the student with LD. He offered insights on the use of restorative circle in this type of situation:

You could attempt to do the circles. It's situational, depending on which group of girls this is, because some of them may be doing it unintentionally, and then there's some other ones that are fairly malicious in their intent. Getting that additional circle may give

that child, that group of girls more power over that girl, and it may be not a good situation.

### **School Administrators Intervening with SWD**

**Student with HF-Autism (Luis).** As part of their investigative process, all administrators would talk to students who reported bullying of the student with HF-Autism. They would also discuss the situation with any other school personnel who might have been able to observe the alleged bullying, including P.E. teachers, classroom teachers, and lunch supervisors. School administrators would then talk to Luis to get his perspective on what happened and the boys accused of bullying him. All school administrators agreed that they would potentially consider implementing a restorative circle; however, this would depend on several variables. The student's level of disability would need to be considered and whether he could engage in the conversation and be an advocate for himself. They noted that the student with HF-Autism would need to be comfortable facing his perpetrators, and his parents would need to provide permission for this to occur. Finally, the students who bullied the student with HF-Autism would need to be ready to show remorse. As one of the school administrators pointed out,

Yeah, so I do think that bringing the students together to talk about it, assuming that the two students have accepted responsibility, and have shown remorse, and are willing to work on it together, would be a good thing. One: For them to understand and hear from Luis, from his perspective of just trying to see the world a little bit from his eyes, but then also for—I think there's also a piece to this, which is developing the skill of Luis, of understanding, reading those different social queues, or in different contexts, something

that's said, just to continue to build his skills to protect himself, and to recognize situations that maybe aren't positive situations, and get himself out of those.

**Differences.** Only one of the school administrators mentioned communicating with Luis' parents to make them aware of the situation and documenting the bullying incident in SWIS. One of them indicated that to prevent and intervene with bullying, the student with HF-Autism would need to receive some social thinking instruction, which would increase his understanding of bullying. This school administrator would want to consult with one of the related services personnel to ensure that social thinking is either embedded in the student's social work services or that he joins a social thinking class at Homestead. Importantly, per this school administrator, most students with HF-Autism attend a social thinking class at Homestead. Yet, another school administrator emphasized the importance of building some bystander support for the student with HF-Autism, which would require working with classroom teachers and students to increase their awareness of disabilities and tolerance for differences.

**Student with EBD (Dwayne).** All school administrators expressed that they would carefully investigate the situation to establish facts. They would talk with other students on the bus (bystanders) who might have had some information and view the bus tapes. One of the administrators elaborated on what his conversation with Dwayne would look like:

I would sit down with Dwayne. I think probably the approach that I would take would be the fact that he's been bullied and how did that make him feel, and the fact that now he's turning around and doing it to somebody else. It's that golden-rule type of conversation and treating others the way that you would want to be treated. The fact that this student has been bullied previously, I feel like that—you could really use that in order to get your point across in terms of Dwayne's actions with this 6<sup>th</sup>-grade boy on the bus.

To further prevent and intervene with bullying of this student, all school administrators recognized the importance of reviewing and revising his BIP. They shared that given his disability, he would most likely have a BIP already, but it would be important to review the specific target behaviors and build in any additional supports such as support from a special education teacher and social worker. As one of them mentioned,

I think a large part of it would be going back to Dwayne's behavior intervention plan, really taking a look at that, seeing if that needs to be updated, but also helping him to understand that how he's treating other people is wrong, and can't happen. There are consequences associated with that, but probably also making sure that they're consequences that are meaningful and effective to helping him understand the impact of his decisions, so that may not look the same for him as it does for the students in the previous [case].

Moreover, school administrators perceived social work services to be an important component of this student's prevention and intervention. They believed that in meeting with one of the school personnel providers, the student with EBD would be able to process his feelings, triggers, and learn how to make more positive decisions in the future. Whether this would include individual or small-group social work services, the student with EBD would need to learn how to identify triggers and increase his decision-making skills.

Furthermore, the school administrators tended to agree that another component of bullying prevention and intervention for the student with EBD would likely include some opportunities to be a leader, receive positive reinforcement, and foster positive interactions with adults.

The school administrators would consider implementing a restorative circle; however, they expressed some caution given that this student has an emotional disability. His readiness to process his feelings and level of emotion regulation would need to be closely considered.

I think for maybe him, more so than in the other situation, is in my experience in working with students with emotional disabilities, there is—they can be having a great day, and something happens, and then it really throws them off. Dwayne could be at that point, and there's some other external factor that shifts his day from being a good day to a bad day, that then that circle can't happen. (...) I feel like there would have to be a lot more demonstration of work being done, and a desire to improve, and recognizing wrong, and coming to terms with that, and wanting to be part of a resolution, in order to do that.

**Differences.** One of school administrators spoke specifically about the importance of considering whether the bullying behavior was related to the student's disability. He would want to know, "Is this typical behavior? Is this in line with what we normally see from him?" The same school administrator mentioned contacting promptly parents and would consider some consequences (e.g., detention), which he noted help some students increase their understanding of how their actions have impacted others. This school administrator pointed out that the bus driver would need to be familiar with the student's needs and supports. Finally, he also identified CICO as a potential intervention for this student. Another administrator noted that he would increase his visibility before and after school and would monitor the bus area. He would consider assigning a seat on the bus for Dwayne. While having a stern conversation to set the expectations, he would also focus on building a relationship with Dwayne.

**Student with LD (Skylar).** Similarly to other school personnel, the school administrators would talk to this student to establish any evidence of cyberbullying and address

Internet safety, specifically, the inappropriateness of sharing passwords. They all stressed the importance of involving parents who would need to monitor the use of social media. The principal's response would likely involve bringing both families together:

I feel like when it's starting to get into social media, that's usually something that's on technology that's provided by the family. That's not something that I have control over.

It's not a bus or a classroom that we really need the family to be onboard with supporting in that, as well.

Additionally, school administrators shared that reteaching the expectations for using technology in similar situations has been integral to bullying prevention and intervention in similar cyberbullying situations they have encountered in the past. They would consider developing some Cool Tools focusing on appropriate use of technology and reteaching students how to use social media. One of them noted that this could be discussed at a Tier 1 meeting if bullying on social media was an increased problem.

School administrators would consider a restorative circle; however, similarly to other hypothetical cases, they noted that it would be important to make sure that the student with LD was comfortable participating in a restorative circle.

***Differences.*** One of the school administrators noted that the student with a similar profile to Skylar who was being bullied would benefit from participating in a lunch friendship group to learn how to establish positive peer relations.

### **Summary of the Main Themes**

Across all four groups of school personnel (units of analysis), thoughtful investigation appeared to be key to responding to reports of bullying involving a student with a disability. This included checking the victimized student's perception of the bullying incident, gathering

additional information from other students involved, and reaching out, potentially, to other teachers. Responding to bullying reports of SWD appeared to be a shared responsibility across all school personnel. Importantly, in all cases involving bullying of SWD, school administrators discussed implementing restorative circles as one of the approaches they would likely utilize to intervene; however, the level of a student's disability would need to be considered.

Both general education and special education teachers shared that teaching and reinforcing the SWAT routine could be an effective approach to bullying prevention and intervention for students with HF-Autism. Related services personnel recognized the importance of increasing the student with HF-Autism's understanding of bullying through the use of videos and role playing as well as teaching the student key phrases to respond to bullying. School administrators noted that they would likely consider implementing a restorative circle with a student with HF-Autism, but this would depend on his level of disability, being comfortable with facing peers who had bullied him, and whether the students who engaged in bullying were ready to show remorse.

In the case involving a student with EBD who exhibited bullying behaviors and made threats of physical aggression, school personnel communicated that it is important to report the incident to school administrators promptly and ask them to intervene. Overall, the interventions identified by the school personnel for a student with EBD tended to vary. General education teachers reported that CICO would be an appropriate intervention to help the student build relationships, while special education teachers and school administrators acknowledged the importance of revising the student's BIP. On the other hand, related services providers and school administrators recommended that this student receive social work services or participate in a SAIG focusing on emotion regulation. School administrators would also likely consider

restorative circle; however, the student's level of emotion regulation would need to be examined before facing the victimized students.

With respect to bullying prevention and intervention for a student with LD who experienced cyberbullying, general education teachers suggested involving the student in extracurricular activities to foster peer relations and involving related services personnel. Special education teachers and related services providers communicated that joining a social skills group focusing on friendship skills and positive peer relations would be beneficial. Finally, school administrators discussed communicating with parents and implementing a restorative circle if the victimized student was comfortable with facing peers who bullied her.

## V. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization of youth with high-incidence disabilities within a multi-tiered framework in a middle school that has implemented PBIS. The extant literature indicates that youth with disabilities are overrepresented within the bullying dynamic (Bear et al., 2015; Blake et al., 2012; Little, 2002; Rose & Espelage, 2012; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011; Van Cleave & Davis, 2006). In spite of the plethora of bullying prevention and intervention programs and their evaluations (e.g., Baldry & Farrington, 2007; Barbero et al., 2012; Evans et al., 2014; Ferguson et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2015; Merrell et al., 2008; Polanin et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2004; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007), few studies have addressed interventions for SWD (Houchins et al., 2016; Rose et al., 2011). In light of the overrepresentation of SWD in the bullying dynamic and limited bullying prevention and interventions that have been implemented and evaluated with this vulnerable population of youth, researchers suggest that bullying prevention and intervention efforts need to be embedded within a multi-tiered preventive framework such as PBIS (Bradshaw, 2013, 2015; Cook et al., 2010; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Ross & Horner, 2009, 2014).

### **Multi-Tiered Framework and its Effect on Bullying Prevention and Intervention for SWD**

Findings from this case study support the recommendations from a growing number of researchers who maintain that PBIS provides an organizational and system structure for a multi-context and multi-tiered approach to bullying prevention, particularly for SWD (Bradshaw, 2013, 2015; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Sugai & Horner, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2015).

**Bullying Prevention and School Climate.** Bullying is a systemic and highly contextual problem, and prevention and intervention, particularly as they relate to SWD, need to be examined through the lens of the socio-ecological perspective (Swearer & Espelage, 2011). Bullying is no longer believed to stem from the individual characteristics of the students involved, but rather it evolves and is sustained through various factors related to interactions among peers, teachers, and other school personnel, as well as community and cultural factors (Swearer & Doll, 2001). Thus, positive school climate is integral to bullying prevention (Bandyopadhyay, Cornell, & Konold, 2009; Bradshaw & Waasdorp, 2009; O'Brennan et al., 2009; O'Brennan, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2014; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Swearer et al., 2009).

Results from this study revealed that the PBIS framework allowed school professionals to establish and promote a positive school climate at Homestead School. School climate at Homestead School was assessed annually, and both students and school personnel reported feeling safe and proud of their school. Several studies have shown that PBIS has a positive impact on school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, & Leaf, 2009; Horner et al., 2009; Horner et al., 2010; Waasdorp et al., 2012). Homestead School personnel established, taught, and positively reinforced school-wide prosocial behavior expectations. Notably, the school personnel perceived teaching students the school-wide expected behaviors as a tool to prevent students' involvement in bullying. Particularly, the focus on teaching and reinforcing respectful behavior, one of the three expected behaviors, and responding to disrespectful behavior became an integral component of bullying prevention and intervention efforts within the PBIS framework at Homestead School. Thus, findings from this study add to the body of research indicating that the PBIS framework sets foundations for creating proactive,

positive, and inclusive school climate that may prevent bullying (Bradshaw, 2015; Bradshaw et al., 2009; O'Brennan et al., 2009; O'Brennan et al., 2014; Waasdorp et al., 2012).

**Bullying Prevention and PBIS Alignment.** Through adopting *Expect Respect*, a school-wide curriculum which is intended to be integrated with PBIS (Stiller et al., 2013), Homestead School embraced the recommendations of the growing number of bullying scholars (Bradshaw, 2013, 2015; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Sugai & Horner, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2015). Notably, school personnel, specifically special education teachers, related services providers, and school administrators, perceived bullying prevention and intervention to be aligned with PBIS. Many school personnel acknowledged that PBIS offered Cool Tools, gotcha tickets, and visuals that were used to teach and reinforce school-wide prosocial behaviors which may, subsequently, prevent bullying.

Surprisingly, among general education teachers, some questioned whether the connection between bullying prevention and PBIS was explicit and deliberate enough. These general educators expressed the opinion that introducing a new school-wide expected behavior “Be Safe” in place of “Be Proud” could render bullying prevention efforts more integrated within PBIS. Given that general educators play a critical role in implementing bully prevention campaigns, they may need to receive more professional development to better understand the current movement to embed bullying prevention and interventions within a multi-tiered framework (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

Additionally, special education teachers shared a concern that Homestead School personnel needed to be more consistent with implementing different components of PBIS. Specifically, they described the need for more consistent reteaching and rewarding of school-wide expected behaviors with gotcha tickets to improve the overall impact of PBIS on bullying

prevention. This is an important finding, yet perhaps not surprising. Fidelity of implementation is one of the critical components addressed in the PBIS literature which includes ongoing training, coaching, and evaluation to sustain the implementation of PBIS practices across all staff and in all school settings (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

### **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Practices Within the Multi-Tiered Framework**

This case study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by underscoring the complexity of bullying prevention and intervention for SWD within the PBIS framework from the perspective of various groups of school personnel who support youth with disabilities. In the section below, I will build on the findings from this case study and the existing literature to address some of the most salient components of bullying prevention and intervention within a multi-tiered framework with a specific focus on SWD.

**Primary/Universal (Tier 1) Bullying Prevention.** Through the adoption of *Expect Respect* and integrating this school-wide bullying prevention curriculum within PBIS, Homestead School established a school climate that does not tolerate bullying but fosters a shared responsibility across various groups of school personnel regarding response to disrespectful behavior before it ever leads to bullying. Importantly, some researchers argue that school-based programs do not always need to focus directly on bullying, as some programs focusing on prevention of other problem behaviors, improvement in the school climate, and development of social-emotional skills may result in bullying prevention (Bradshaw, 2015). It is important that when schools implement school-wide bullying prevention initiatives, they consider those programs that have been evaluated and have shown significant outcome data (Swearer et al., 2010). To this date, there have only been two empirical studies that have examined the effectiveness of BP-PBS known as *Expect Respect* in elementary schools (see Ross

& Horner, 2009, 2014). The preliminary findings suggest that it is a simple and efficient approach that can be embedded within an established PBIS Tier 1 and may result in the reduction of physical bullying (Ross & Horner, 2009) and a change in students' perceptions related to bullying (e.g., their level of assertiveness, use of the stop signal, and willingness to intervene as bystanders; Ross & Horner, 2014).

***Bullying Measurement.*** Given the overall positive school climate at Homestead School, it is, perhaps, no wonder that school personnel reported believing that bullying involvement of SWD was comparable to that of their peers without disabilities, and overall bullying of both SWD and their peers without disabilities was not perceived to be a large-scale problem. Yet, it is important to note that studies that have directly compared and contrasted general education teachers' and general education students' views on bullying revealed a discrepancy between the perceived problem and bullying prevalence (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002). Thus, appropriate measurement of bullying that could guide the school's decision making is vital to bullying prevention and intervention in the PBIS framework (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009; Bradshaw & Waasdorp, 2009). In middle schools, specifically, bullying is more likely to occur in less structured settings outside of teachers' view (Espelage & Asidao, 2001), bullying is more covert in its nature (e.g., relational aggression; Vaillancourt et al., 2008), and could be underreported because adolescents are reluctant to report it to teachers out of fear of retaliation (Espelage & Asidao, 2001). This further underscores the importance of the appropriate measurement of bullying in a middle school with a multi-tiered framework.

Bullying was measured at Homestead School with teacher/staff and student satisfaction surveys and ODRs. While the psychometric properties of these satisfaction surveys were not available to evaluate their effectiveness as a data collection tool to measure bullying, the

obtained results suggest higher prevalence of bullying victimization at Homestead School (34.97%) than the national rates (10.6%) found in the general population in Grades 6-10 (Nansel et al., 2001). In contrast, only 6.56% of the Homestead students reported bullying others, while Nansel and colleagues found that 13% of youth in Grades 6-10 bullied others. Notably, nearly two-thirds of the Homestead students had seen other students bullying others at school, which suggests that bullying is a pervasive problem at this school.

Although the results from the student satisfaction survey offered broad insight into the bullying level at Homestead School, they provided limited information about bullying involvement of SWD. SWD participated in this survey, yet their responses were not aggregated, and thus it remains unclear what percentage of the youth with disabilities engaged in bullying behaviors and experienced victimization, as well as how they tended to respond to bullying (e.g., their use of the SWAT routine, and their willingness to report bullying to adults).

Furthermore, ODRs are utilized in PBIS schools for data-based decision making, specifically, to assess and monitor school-wide discipline and the potential need for more targeted interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2002; Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). However, results from this case study suggest that the ODR data likely resulted in an underestimate of the bullying behavior at Homestead School, given that there were only eight incidents recorded during the 2016-17 school year, which comprised 2.05% of all problem behaviors categorized as “Majors.” Challenges with differentiating bullying from disrespectful behavior (categorized as both a “Major” and “Minor” on the ODR form) may have resulted in the overall low number of bullying behaviors reflected in the ODR data at Homestead School. As some of the participants pointed out, there were several problem behaviors listed on the ODR form that could be part of a bullying pattern. Results from this study also illuminate the

importance of examining whether any SWD are among the youth who receive ODRs for bullying others. Finally, it is important to note that because incidents of peer victimization are not documented on ODRs, overall, the ODR data provide an incomplete picture of the bullying involvement of youth, specifically, SWD who tend to be victimized at a higher rate.

Although the multi-tiered framework, such as PBIS, has a high likelihood of resulting in positive school climate which, in turn, may prevent bullying of students such as SWD who are at higher risk, it is critical that appropriate data on bullying perpetration and victimization of SWD be collected and analyzed. Otherwise, those youth with disabilities who need more targeted Tier 2 or individualized Tier 3 interventions could be overlooked.

***Bullying Definition.*** Because bullying is a systemic problem, all school personnel play a substantial role in the socio-ecological model of bullying prevention and intervention (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012) and their awareness of bullying is an important component of Tier 1 bullying prevention. Many studies have shown that adults' awareness and responses to bullying may affect students' willingness to seek help (e.g., Mishna et al., 2005; Yoon & Kerber, 2003), which is an issue that needs to be closely examined when designing effective bullying prevention and intervention programs (Bauman & Del Rio, 2005; Holt & Keys, 2004; Hymel et al., 2015). Research has found that teachers have difficulty identifying bullying and distinguishing the key components of its definition (Craig, Bell, & Leschied, 2011; Mishna et al., 2005; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001).

Importantly, the school personnel who participated in this case study were able to identify some key features of the bullying definition such as repeated, ongoing, targeted behavior, in order to differentiate it from other problem behaviors; however, they did not share a universal definition of bullying. Notably, only related services providers and school administrators

pointed out the imbalance in strength and power that leads to asymmetric relationships between the bully and victim. The real or perceived power differential is a significant component of the bullying definition to identify youth at higher risk for bullying such as SWD (Ybarra, Espelage, & Mitchell, 2014).

It is important to note that one of the main objectives of *Expect Respect* is to help students and school personnel discriminate respectful from disrespectful behavior (Stiller et al., 2013). This is based on the premise that the bullying definition is a complex construct that requires a judgment call on the part of observers to appropriately discern the intent of the behavior, power differential, and repeated nature (Ross, Horner, & Stiller, 2008). Thus, following the key tenets of *Expect Respect*, school personnel at Homestead had been instructed to respond to any occurrence of disrespectful behavior before it potentially evolves into bullying. However, it is important for school personnel to develop a shared bullying definition and use it to accurately identify incidents that in fact involve bullying behaviors, specifically when SWD are involved. According to the 2013 “Dear Colleague Letter,” which is a guidance document for school districts (U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2013), once it is determined that SWD have been bullied or have bullied others, an IEP meeting may need to be convened to discuss the impact of bullying on the student and to determine whether the IEP continues to address his or her needs and provides a meaningful educational benefit. Notably, the OSERS suggested that the IEP team may need to consider providing the SWD with additional special education or related services if his or her needs have changed after being involved in bullying.

***Responding to Bullying.*** As mentioned earlier, teachers’ awareness and responses to bullying are an important component of the universal prevention (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). At

Homestead, school personnel reported responding to bullying of SWD and their peers without disabilities in the same or a similar manner, which was a shared responsibility across all school personnel. Across all four groups of school personnel, thoughtful investigation appeared to be key to responding to reports of bullying involving SWD. This included checking the victimized student's perception of the bullying incident, gathering additional information from other students involved, communicating with other teachers to establish facts, and reporting bullying to school administrators. In addition, general education teachers reported communicating with the student's case manager/special education teacher and involving related services personnel as necessary. School personnel recognized that SWD might have difficulty with social awareness; thus, they conveyed the importance of talking to SWD and checking their perceptions of the situations. Overall, it appeared that school personnel were likely to take additional time to investigate the reports of bullying involving SWD. Notably, special education teachers reported feeling particularly protective of SWD when responding to reports of victimization due to the fact that they perceived these students as more vulnerable than their peers without a disability.

Furthermore, according to *Expect Respect*, all school personnel needed to use the SWAT routine when responding to reports of bullying (i.e., thank the student for reporting bullying behavior, assess the student's safety, ask the student if she/he told the other peer to stop and walk away, and reteach the SWAT routine); however, few participants described the SWAT routine as part of the protocol they followed when responding to bullying at Homestead School. Since the SWAT routine is one of the key components of *Expect Respect*, it is important to ensure the consistent implementation of this strategy across all school personnel. Fortunately, the authors of *Expect Respect* have provided fidelity checklists for staff members in the program handbook (see Stiller et al., 2013) which they suggest completing quarterly during staff meetings. Stiller

and colleagues (2013) emphasized the importance of adults consistently responding to reports of bullying to show students their support of the program.

Moreover, the use of ODRs as part of the school personnel's response to bullying did not appear to be a consistent practice across the different participants at Homestead. Only special education teachers and school administrators mentioned completing ODRs as part of their response to reports of bullying. This underscores the importance of ongoing training (e.g., refreshers) to develop a common understanding of the operationalized definitions of various problem behaviors considered as "Minors" or "Majors" and to clarify the expectations for completing ODRs when responding to bullying.

Additionally, restorative justice practices were utilized to some extent when responding to bullying at Homestead School. Some school personnel had received professional development training on the use of restorative practices in the school setting, and the school administrators specifically described implementing restorative circles to intervene with significant behavior problems including bullying. One of the main objectives for the use of restorative justice practices in schools is moving away from the punitive approaches to discipline (e.g., suspensions and expulsions) and placing greater emphasis on restoring and repairing relationships among students and adults and improving school climate (Hurley, Guckenburg, Persson, Fronius, & Petrosino, 2015). In fact, there is a growing interest in integrating restorative justice practices with the PBIS framework (Eber, 2015; Eber & Swain-Bradway, 2015; National Forum Round Table, 2015). Therefore, similarly to other PBIS schools, there appeared to be a growing awareness of integrating restorative justice practices into PBIS at Homestead.

Importantly, PBIS leaders tend to exercise some caution with respect to implementing restorative practices in schools (Eber, 2015; Eber & Swain-Bradway, 2015; National Forum Round Table, 2015). They point out that restorative justice practices have a relatively high social validity and have been endorsed by several educational organizations (e.g., National Education Association, the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights); however, there is no widely disseminated model yet for integrating restorative justice practices within the PBIS framework (Eber, 2015; Eber & Swain-Bradway, 2015; National Forum Round Table, 2015). Overall, there are limited empirical data on the effectiveness of restorative practices in the school settings (National Forum Round Table, 2015).

Although Homestead School personnel had integrated *Expect Respect* within the PBIS framework, the related services personnel acknowledged the need for an SEL program to be implemented at the classroom level. Their concern for more universal and direct interventions at the classroom level was consistent with recommendations from SEL proponents who argue that all students need more systematic instruction to develop five major social-emotional competencies including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making to increase their academic and social-emotional outcomes (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007).

Homestead related services providers had implemented *Second Step* (Committee for Children, 2008) as a pilot intervention in some advisory classrooms during the 2016-17 school year. This program focuses on several themes related to adolescents' risk and protective factors, including empathy and communication, bullying prevention, emotion management, problem

solving, decision making and goal setting, and substance abuse prevention (Committee for Children, 2008). Notably, *Second Step* is one of the few SEL interventions that have been evaluated with students with high-incidence disabilities who attended middle schools. The results from these studies show a significant decrease in bullying perpetration (Espelage et al., 2015) and relational victimization (Sullivan et al., 2015).

***Classroom-Level Bullying Prevention and Intervention Practices.*** A recurring theme shared across all school personnel at Homestead School was that *Expect Respect* and its club members played a key role in developing bullying awareness activities that were implemented in advisory classrooms a few times a year. These bullying prevention activities focused on reinforcing school-wide expected behaviors, specifically, being respectful, teaching students how to use the SWAT routine to respond to disrespectful behavior, and increasing students' awareness of bystander intervention. Overall, there appeared to be a shared belief among the school personnel that teaching students how to respond to disrespectful behavior empowers bystanders, and this was integral to bullying prevention and intervention efforts at Homestead. Because bullying is a systemic and group process (Swearer & Espelage, 2011), research shows that increasing bystander intervention is key to preventing and decreasing bullying (Polanin et al., 2012).

In spite of their concerted effort to teach and encourage all students to use the SWAT routine to respond to disrespectful behavior, school personnel indicated that adolescents perceived it as juvenile and were less likely to use it. This indicates the importance of using interventions and practices that have demonstrated ecological validity with adolescents. Importantly, the authors of *Expect Respect* encourage schools to adapt the key components of

this program, specifically the use of a “stop” strategy, to fit the local context (Stiller et al., 2013).

Moreover, while the various bullying prevention activities implemented in advisory classrooms were one of the main components of *Expect Respect* at Homestead School, general educators acknowledged that SWD have difficulty enagaging actively and contributing to these activities. This suggests that SWD may benefit from primary (Tier 1) prevention implemented at the classroom level to a lesser extent than their peers without disabilities, and they likely need some additional accommodations or modifications to learn from these *Expect Respect* activities. More direct interventions that have demonstrated effectiveness may need to be considered in addition to these classroom-level bullying prevention activities.

Although school personnel generally reported that bullying involvement of SWD at Homestead was comparable to that of their peers without disabilities, general and special educators as well as related services providers revealed that peers without disabilities were likely to be friendlier and kinder toward students with more severe disabilities who attended self-contained classrooms, yet they had more difficulty understanding academic or behavioral problems demonstrated by students with less visible disabilities included in general education classrooms.

Furthermore, general and special educators identified some risk factors that youth with less visible disabilities included in general education classrooms demonstrated, which is consistent with the existing literature (see Swearer et al., 2012). They described characteristics related to students’ disabilities (e.g., working at the slower pace and blurting out inappropriate statements) that may put youth with high-incidence disabilities at higher risk for bullying victimization in general education classrooms, specifically social exclusion. General education

teachers indicated that youth without disabilities are less likely to select SWD as their partners when group work is assigned in the classroom.

Thus, as part of the classroom-level primary bullying prevention, teachers may use cooperative learning groups as one of the inclusive practices that provide opportunities for learning and practicing social skills for youth with disabilities and validating them through same-aged peers (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008; Mishna, 2003; Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). Researchers have noted that teachers need to consider strengths and weaknesses of SWD and their peers without disabilities when pairing them in cooperative learning groups and need to monitor them closely (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). It is also important that teachers provide students with explicit group tasks and that, particularly, SWD have specific responsibilities in cooperative learning groups (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

Additionally, findings from this study suggest that the level of disability awareness among peers without disabilities plays a role in bullying prevention for students with high-functioning disabilities educated in general education settings. Particularly among Homestead school administrators, there was a shared understanding that one of the areas for improvement with respect to bullying prevention for students with high-functioning disabilities was increased disability awareness among peers without disabilities to promote empathy and acceptance. Similarly within other groups of school personnel, there were at least one to two individuals within each group who acknowledged the importance of increased disability awareness. Moreover, school administrators expressed that teachers also need more disability awareness to understand how different disabilities (e.g., EBD) may affect a student's involvement in bullying.

**Secondary (Tier 2) Bullying Prevention & Intervention.** One of the main benefits of the multi-tiered framework is its fluidity (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012; Sugai & Horner, 2002), and findings from this study reveal that SWD had relatively quick and easy access to targeted Tier 2 interventions. Although bullying of SWD did not appear to be a large problem at Homestead School according to the participants, SWD would typically receive Tier 2 interventions if they were at risk for bullying or other problem behaviors. Tier 2 interventions utilized at Homestead included CICO, SAIG, and brief FBA/BIP. Notably, CICO has been evaluated and found effective in reducing problem behaviors (see Hawken & Horner, 2003; Todd, Campbell, Meyer, & Horner, 2008). FBA-based interventions have extensive empirical evidence (see the What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report, 2016). In contrast, the SAIG curriculum utilized lesson plans that had been developed by another PBIS school district and no empirical data about its effectiveness were available.

Researchers who advocate for embedding bullying prevention and intervention for SWD within a multi-tiered framework have recognized that as part of the secondary intervention SWD need to develop social competence (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). Thus, SEL programs with a substantial empirical base need to be considered to help youth with disabilities develop social competencies. Similarly, it is important that PBIS teams utilize high-quality universal screening tools (see Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model of Prevention, n.d.) to identify SWD at higher risk for emotional and behavioral problems. School personnel need to consider the unique risk factors of students with high-incidence disabilities while selecting Tier 2 SEL interventions and their progress needs to be monitored.

**Tertiary (Tier 3) Bullying Prevention & Intervention.** A central theme that emerged among general educators at Homestead School was that more intensive interventions were

needed for students who do not respond to PBIS Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. While the Tier 3 Team existed at Homestead School and few students had been referred for more intensive interventions due to social-emotional problems, there were no formal Tier 3 interventions available for students who did not respond to Tier 2 supports. Importantly, the PBIS coach indicated that more systematic protocols for Tier 3 interventions were going to be developed in the summer 2017.

Bradshaw (2015) noted that the majority of bullying research has focused on universal bullying prevention programs while less is known about the implementation and effectiveness of targeted and individualized bullying interventions. Given that SWD are overrepresented in the bullying dynamic (Bear et al., 2015; Blake et al., 2012; Little, 2002; Rose & Espelage, 2012; Rose, Monda-Amaya, et al., 2011; Van Cleave & Davis, 2006), researchers argue that these students need more intensive and individualized interventions (Espelage et al., 2015; Houchins et al., 2016; Rose et al., 2011). As mentioned earlier, only a few studies have evaluated the effectiveness of interventions to prevent or decrease bullying of SWD (Houchins et al., 2016).

A meaningful component of this study was engaging different school educators in a discussion about three hypothetical scenarios involving students with high-incidence disabilities. Given their unique risk factors related to their disabilities as well as their different bullying roles and experiences, these hypothetical SWD would likely need more individualized tertiary interventions. Bullying experts maintain that youth with disabilities who experience chronic bullying or victimization require more individualized social-emotional and behavioral interventions (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012). Homestead School personnel identified various components of bullying prevention and intervention they perceived to be appropriate with the hypothetical SWD, with a range of levels of intensity.

All Homestead School personnel recognized difficulties understanding social interactions that students with HF-Autism tend to experience (Schroeder et al., 2014), and thus described the importance of gathering information and examining whether a student's perception of a bullying incident was accurate. Related services providers specifically discussed some direct instruction (e.g., using videos, role playing, and teaching the student key phrases to respond to bullying). Additionally, both general education and special education teachers described teaching and reinforcing the SWAT routine as an effective approach to bullying prevention and intervention for students with HF-Autism due to its prescribed nature; however, they noted that multiple opportunities to practice the SWAT routine and modified visuals may need to be considered.

Moreover, while discussing the hypothetical case involving a student with EBD who exhibited bullying behaviors and made threats of physical aggression, general and special educators communicated the importance of promptly reporting the incident to school administrators. The potential interventions the school personnel suggested for a student with EBD tended to vary across different groups of educators. General education teachers reported that CICO would be an appropriate intervention to help the student build relationships. Notably, special education teachers and school administrators acknowledged the importance of revising the student's BIP. Additionally, both related services providers and school administrators acknowledged that a student with EBD who engages in bullying would need social work services focusing on anger management and decision-making skills. Related services providers also pointed out that the student could receive support with emotion regulation by joining one of the SAIGs.

With respect to bullying prevention and intervention for the hypothetical student with LD who experienced cyberbullying, general education teachers emphasized the importance of

involving the student in extracurricular activities to foster positive peer relations. Several studies have documented that poor social skills and low peer support are predictive of bullying involvement among youth both with and without disabilities (e.g., Blake et al., 2016; Cook et al., 2010; Farmer et al., 2015), and extracurricular participation is one of the recommended practices, particularly at Tier 2 (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). Importantly, teaching social skills to help the student with LD develop and maintain positive peer relationships was one of the main components of bullying prevention and intervention described by special education teachers and related services providers.

Given that Homestead School administrators had utilized restorative justice practices as an approach to school discipline, they shared valuable perspectives on the use of restorative practices with SWD. In each of the hypothetical cases involving youth with high-functioning disabilities, school administrators expressed some caution with respect to involving SWD in restorative circles in the aftermath of bullying. They indicated that one's disability needs to be considered to ensure that the student is able to engage and benefit from participating in a restorative circle. For example, school administrators recognized that students with HF-Autism need to have adequate social awareness and verbal communication to engage in a restorative circle. Furthermore, the school administrators acknowledged that the level of a student's emotion regulation needs to be considered to make sure that the student with EBD is able to engage in a restorative circle (e.g., being able to show remorse and manage feelings when discussing the incident with the victim). Finally, school administrators pointed out that a student with LD who has low social peer support and has been cyberbullied needs to be comfortable facing her perpetrators to implement a restorative circle and prevent re-victimization. All in all, the school administrators' perspectives on the use of restorative circles with youth with high-

functioning disabilities illuminates the importance of developing models for integrating restorative practices with PBIS (National Forum Round Table, 2015) and, specifically, evaluating the use of restorative justice practices with SWD.

As demonstrated above, Homestead School educators identified a range of different bullying prevention and intervention components and practices they would likely consider when intervening with youth with high-incidence disabilities involved in bullying as victims, bully-victims, or bullies. Most of them were part of the existing Tier 1 or Tier 2 supports available at Homestead. Proponents of embedding bullying prevention and intervention within the multi-tiered framework advise conducting FBA for students who repeatedly bully others or are chronically victimized (Rose, Allison, et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). They emphasize the importance of recognizing that each behavior is functional and communicative, and tertiary supports for SWD with chronic bullying perpetration and victimization need to include FBA-based individualized interventions (Rose, Allison, et al. 2012). Based on their unique risk factors, SWD may need different interventions and completing FBA provides an individualized approach to determining what triggers and maintains the behavior, the overall function of the behavior, and whether the behavior is a skill or performance deficit (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). Subsequently, an individualized intervention package needs to be developed to include interventions focusing on antecedents, teaching replacement behaviors, and appropriate positive reinforcement (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

### **Implications for Researchers**

This case study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by underscoring the complexity of bullying prevention and intervention for SWD within the PBIS framework from

the perspective of various groups of school personnel who support youth with high-incidence disabilities. However, this study found that several problems remain unresolved and require further attention from researchers.

It remains unclear how youth with high-incidence disabilities attending a middle school with a multi-tiered framework experience and perceive bullying prevention and intervention. Examining their perspectives would likely shed more light on the extent to which bullying prevention and intervention within the PBIS framework affects youth with disabilities' awareness of bullying and responding to bullying, and it could help identify, develop, and refine effective, ecologically valid interventions. It would also be important to gain a better understanding of how youth with high-incidence disabilities experience system-wide supports at each tier of intensity within the PBIS framework, specifically, what social and emotional skills they acquire and how they generalize them to other settings to prevent or reduce their involvement in bullying.

In addition to examining the perspectives of students with high-incidence disabilities in future research, it would be beneficial to incorporate direct observations of tiered meetings in a middle school with the PBIS framework. These observations could offer more insight into data-based decision making and tiered and individualized interventions to better understand how the PBIS framework impacts bullying prevention and intervention efforts. Similarly, direct observations conducted during Tier 1 bullying awareness activities and Tier 2 and 3 interventions would shed more light on the extent to which students with high-incidence disabilities access and benefit from these supports.

Several leading researchers have already noted that the next phase of special education bullying research needs to focus on intervention studies to determine effective practices for

preventing and reducing bullying among SWD (e.g., Rose et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2011; Rose, Stormont et al., 2015). Rose and colleagues (2009) noted that whole-school anti-bullying programs are critical components of bullying prevention and intervention; however, specific supports need to be developed and evaluated for groups that are at higher risk for bullying perpetration and victimization. As this study indicated, a middle school that integrated a school-wide bullying prevention program within the PBIS framework had targeted Tier 2 interventions but needed to develop more individualized and intensified Tier 3 interventions for youth with high-incidence disabilities. Thus, future research needs to continue to focus on the effectiveness of more intensive bullying prevention and intervention programs specifically for SWD. The fact that youth with disabilities are overrepresented in the bullying dynamic, and yet, thus far, few studies have evaluated the effectiveness of bullying prevention and intervention programs with this specific population is alarming. Both PBIS and SEL scholars maintain that more remains to be learned about bullying prevention and intervention, and this is particularly true with respect to youth with disabilities. Since Rose and colleagues published their seminal literature review in 2011 focusing on bullying perpetration and victimization of SWD, many scholars have dedicated their research agendas to advancing the public's understanding of bullying prevalence among students across various disabilities and their unique risk and protective factors. As a result, the research community has a much better understanding of *why* youth with disabilities are at higher risk for bullying victimization and perpetration. The research focusing on *how* to prevent and intervene with bullying of SWD is increasing, and the call for embedding bullying prevention and intervention within a multi-tiered framework offers hope that students who are at higher risk for bullying could receive intensive evidence-based interventions that reduce their risk factors and increase protective factors.

## **Implications for Practitioners**

Additionally, this case study has important implications for practitioners who are particularly interested in integrating bullying prevention and intervention efforts within a multi-tiered framework. First, this study raises a greater awareness of the importance of collecting data focusing on bullying of SWD in schools that adopt a multi-tiered framework. PBIS teams need to adopt appropriate screening data collection tools to determine the level of bullying prevalence among SWD and to identify SWD who are at higher risk for bullying victimization and perpetration due to their low social-emotional skills.

Additionally, to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of integrating prevention and intervention within the multi-tiered framework for SWD, educators need to ensure that the ODR data on bullying perpetration are collected accurately, and additional, more sensitive data collection tools need to be utilized to determine the level of bullying victimization among SWD.

Furthermore, it is important that school personnel and students develop a universal definition of bullying to use when they witness or respond to reports of alleged bullying. Many studies have documented that it is challenging for school personnel and students to define bullying in a similar manner, specifically, the perceived power differential; however, a shared definition creates a universal language and increases awareness of bullying vs. other problem behaviors. In addition to establishing a shared definition of bullying, school personnel and students need to develop anti-bullying rules and display them along with school-wide positive expected behaviors.

Educators working in schools that have implemented multi-tiered frameworks need to realize that school-wide (Tier 1) bullying awareness activities may need to be differentiated for SWD. To fully benefit from these prevention activities, SWD may need to be retaught certain

skills more explicitly (e.g., with the use of additional visuals, and role-playing). Additionally, youth with disabilities also need to be consistently positively reinforced for self-advocating when they report bullying. Likewise, all teachers need to take seriously any report of alleged bullying involving SWD to increase SWD's confidence in adults and the likelihood that they will report incidents in the future. Additionally, in light of the fact that youth with disabilities often have difficulties self-advocating for what they need (Prater, Redman, Anderson, & Gibb, 2014), they need to be taught more explicitly about the importance of reporting bullying to teachers and other adults.

Furthermore, to select and implement appropriate Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, educators need to utilize social-emotional screenings to identify SWD with low social-emotional skills. Youth with disabilities may need to develop different social-emotional skills than their peers without disabilities, such as self-awareness, social skills/friendship skills, perspective taking, assertiveness training, social problem solving, and anger management, based on their disability characteristics. Specifically, Tier 3 interventions need to be highly individualized and match the needs of SWD to prevent or reduce their engagement in bullying behaviors or victimization.

Moreover, practitioners need to pay close attention to youth with EBD and their involvement in bullying perpetration, which could be a manifestation of their disabilities (Rose & Espelage, 2012). This evokes a number of important implications for practitioners, particularly when bullying behaviors result in serious violations of school rules. An IEP team needs to make sure that students with EBD receive direct interventions to acquire prosocial skills and that school personnel understand the connection between disability characteristics (e.g.,

difficulty developing/maintaining positive peer relations, increased aggression, and poor problem-solving skills) and these students' likely involvement in bullying perpetration.

Additionally, to decrease the research-to-practice gap, teacher preparation programs need to help future educators gain a better understanding of risk and protective factors of SWD and evidence-based practices in bullying prevention and intervention. Particularly, pre-service general and special educators need to understand how a student's disability likely affects his or her involvement in bullying. It is also safe to say that disability awareness needs to be part of ongoing professional development to increase teachers' understanding of SWD's higher risk for bullying perpetration and victimization and to assist them in incorporating disability awareness activities into their classroom instruction.

### **Limitations**

This study has limitations that need to be considered. I accessed multiple sources of evidence and employed several key informants to describe bullying prevention and intervention for students with high-incidence disabilities in the middle school within a multi-tiered framework; however, I did not elicit the students' perspectives. Without a doubt, incorporating student voices would have enhanced the triangulation of data; however, it was possible that face-to-face conversations about bullying could retraumatize SWD who had experienced bullying or bullied others. Thus, for this study I relied on other sources of evidence to eliminate any potential harm and risk to the students.

Furthermore, case study research requires prolonged time in the field to develop a deep understanding of the "real-world phenomenon" (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2014). I conducted this case study during the last 3 months of the 2016-17 school year, which could be considered limited field time. However, it is important to note that during these 3 months, I visited

Homestead School 40 times, which provided multiple opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of the setting and the participants. It is possible that, given the school personnel's limited time resources, they could be less willing to participate in the study if the fieldwork lasted longer than 3 months. Importantly, the timeline of this case study was conducive to its research questions. I was able to gather evidence about bullying prevention and intervention efforts as the school year was coming to an end. Therefore, the participants were able to discuss their school year-long experiences with bullying prevention and intervention at Homestead School.

In spite of these limitations, results from this case study provide researchers, policy makers, and practitioners with a more intricate understanding of how bullying prevention and intervention for youth with high-incidence disabilities is enacted in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework. Furthermore, findings from this study set the stage for future research focusing on integrating bullying prevention and intervention within the multi-tiered framework, specifically as it relates to SWD.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A. IRB Approval Letter

### UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)  
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)  
203 Administrative Office Building  
1737 West Polk Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7227

#### Approval Notice Initial Review (Response To Modifications)

March 7, 2017

Agata Trzaska, Ed. S.  
Special Education



RE: **Protocol # 2017-0084**  
**"A Case Study of Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities in Middle School"**

Dear Ms. Trzaska:

*Please note that stamped and approved .pdfs of all recruitment and consent documents will be forwarded as an attachment to a separate email. OPRS/IRB no longer issues paper letters and stamped/approved documents, so it will be necessary to retain the emailed documents for your files for auditing purposes.*

**Please remember that if Chicago Public School (CPS) faculty, staff, or students are enrolled into this research, the CPS RRB requires that their own review be conducted after the UIC IRB has granted initial approval for this research. If CPS RRB approval is required, it must be accompanied by an Amendment form when submitted to the UIC IRB.**

**Please note that if non-CPS school faculty, staff, or students are enrolled into the research, a letter of support will be required from each non-CPS school or school district and must be accompanied by an Amendment form when submitted to the UIC IRB.**

Your Initial Review (Response To Modifications) was reviewed and approved by the Expedited review process on March 2, 2017. You may now begin your research

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

**Protocol Approval Period:** March 2, 2017 - March 2, 2018  
**Approved Subject Enrollment #:** 18  
**Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors:** These determinations have not been made for this study since it has not been approved for enrollment of minors.  
**Performance Sites:** UIC  
**Sponsor:** Albin and Young Scholarship from Special

Phone: 312-996-1711

<http://www.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/oprs/>

FAX: 312-413-2929

Education Department

**PAF#:** - Not applicable

**Research Protocol(s):**

- a) Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities; Version 2; 02/14/2017

**Recruitment Material(s):**

- a) School Personnel Recruitment Flyer; Version 2; 01/14/2017  
 b) Email to Recruit Additional Participants; Version 2; 02/14/2017  
 c) School Personnel Recruitment: Study Reminder; Version 2; 02/14/2017  
 d) School Personnel Recruitment Script; Version 2; 02/14/2017

**Informed Consent(s):**

- a) Re-Consent Form; Version 1; 01/19/2017  
 b) School Administrators Consent Form; Version 2; 02/14/2017  
 c) PBIS Leader/Coach Consent Form; Version 2; 02/14/2017  
 d) Teacher Consent Form; Version 2; 02/14/2017  
 e) Related Services Personnel Consent Form; Version 2; 02/14/2017

Your research meets the criteria for expedited review as defined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) under the following specific category(ies):

(5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis)., (6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes., (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including but not limited to research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

**Please note the Review History of this submission:**

Receipt Date	Submission Type	Review Process	Review Date	Review Action
01/25/2017	Initial Review	Expedited	02/10/2017	Modifications Required
02/15/2017	Response To Modifications	Expedited	03/02/2017	Approved

Please remember to:

→ Use your **research protocol number** (2017-0084) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the OPRS website at,  
**"UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects"**  
<http://tiger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/policies/0924.pdf>

**Please note that the UIC IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions,**

Page 3 of 3

**seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.**

**Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.**

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 996-2014.

Sincerely,

Sandra Costello  
Assistant Director, IRB # 2  
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Enclosure(s) will be sent as an attachment in a separate email:

**1. Informed Consent Document(s):**

- a) Re-Consent Form; Version 1; 01/19/2017
- b) School Administrators Consent Form; Version 2; 02/14/2017
- c) PBIS Leader/Coach Consent Form; Version 2; 02/14/2017
- d) Teacher Consent Form; Version 2; 02/14/2017
- e) Related Services Personnel Consent Form; Version 2; 02/14/2017

**2. Recruiting Material(s):**

- a) School Personnel Recruitment Flyer; Version 2; 01/14/2017
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- c) School Personnel Recruitment: Study Reminder; Version 2; 02/14/2017
- d) School Personnel Recruitment Script; Version 2; 02/14/2017

cc: Norma Lopez-Renya, Special Education, M/C 147  
Elizabeth Talbott (Faculty Advisor), Special Education, M/C 147

## APPENDIX B. Guidelines for Selecting a Middle School for the Study

District/School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Levels Served: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1	The school has received platinum recognition.  If none of the platinum schools provide permission to conduct the study, schools with gold recognition will be considered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2	The school has a school-wide anti-bullying program or SEL program.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3	The school provides a continuum of services for SWD, including general education with inclusion, resource setting, and self-contained classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4	The school has the longest history of PBIS implementation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
5	This school is racially/ethnically and culturally diverse.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6	The researcher has easy access to school (approximately 30 miles away).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

### APPENDIX C. Midwest PBIS Network Criteria for the Gold and Platinum Recognition in 2016-17

Recognition Level	Gold	Platinum
The PBIS National Center Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)	School needs to achieve fidelity at two Tiers 70% at Tier 1 80% at Tier 2 <i>or</i> 3	School needs to achieve fidelity at all Tiers 70% at Tier 1 80% at Tier 2 80% at Tier 3 School must be able to provide data that indicate students' response or success at all three Tiers
Office Discipline Referrals	80-90% of all students with 0-1 ODRs 5-15% of all students with 2-5 ODRs 1-5% of students with 6 or more ODRs	80-90% of all students with 0-1 ODRs 5-15% of all students with 2-5 ODRs 1-5% of students with 6 or more ODRs
Suspension Rates	6% or fewer students received an out-of-school suspension in Middle/Junior and High School	6% or fewer students received an out-of-school suspension in Middle/Junior and High School
Tier 2/Tier 3 Tracking Tool Data	School has at least one Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention for students who are not responding to Tier 1 instruction. 5-15% of students are receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions At least 70% of these students are responding (on average) to each Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention.	School has at least two Tier 2 interventions for students who are not responding to Tier 1 instruction. 5-15% of students are receiving Tier 2 interventions At least 70% of these students are responding (on average) to each Tier 2 intervention. School has at least one Tier 3 intervention for students who are not responding to Tier 2 interventions. 1-5% of students are receiving Tier 3 interventions at any given time throughout the year At least 70% of these students are responding (on average) to each Tier 3 intervention. At least 70% of these students are responding (on average) to each Tier 2 intervention.
Action Steps	School needs to document two Action Steps from TFI and/or from Tier 1 or Tier 2 data used to improve student outcomes.	School needs to document two Action Steps from TFI and/or from Tier 1 or Tier 2 data used to improve student outcomes.
Sustainability	None	School provides a summary that describes how it has been sustaining and/or improving student outcomes within the past 3 or more years.

## APPENDIX D. School Personnel Recruitment Flyer



### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY:**

#### **“Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students With Disabilities in Middle School”**

My name is Agata Trzaska and I am a PhD student in the Department of Special Education at University of Illinois at Chicago. I am conducting a research study to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization of students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework such as Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS).

**Certified school personnel, including general education teachers, special education teachers, social workers, speech and language therapists, school psychologists, assistant principals, principal, and PBIS leader/coach, may be involved in this study.**

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in two 40-50 minute-long interviews to share your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, with respect to students with disabilities. I will also collect some documentation and physical artifacts related to bullying prevention and intervention.

**Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you would like to know more about the study, please attend a staff/teacher meeting on \_\_\_\_\_.**

**If you are unable to attend this meeting or if you prefer to meet in person to ask questions about this study, feel free to contact me.**

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Agata Trzaska, Ph.D. Student

Phone: [REDACTED] Email: atrzas2@uic.edu

Department and Institution: Special Education Department, University of Illinois at Chicago

Faculty Sponsor Name and Title: Elizabeth Talbott, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Special Education

***If you are eligible and agree to participate in this research study, you will receive a \$30 Gift Card for your time and effort.***

***Thank you!***

## APPENDIX E. School Personnel Recruitment Script



**University of Illinois at Chicago  
School Personnel Recruitment Script  
A Case Study of Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities  
in Middle School**

My name is Agata Trzaska and I am a PhD student in the department of special education at University of Illinois at Chicago. I am conducting a research study to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization of students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework such as Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS).

Results from this study will provide a broad description of school-wide, secondary, and tertiary interventions aiming to prevent and reduce bullying of students with different disabilities and served in diverse educational placements. By exploring how different school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities, this investigation will provide context for understanding some key factors that hinder or foster effective approach to prevention and intervention for students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework. Taken together, this information may help inform how to effectively prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities. Thus, the proposed study will benefit the research community, policy makers, and practitioners.

Approximately 18 school personnel (4-6 general education teachers, 4-6 special education teachers, 2-3 related services providers, 1-2 school administrators, 1 PBIS leader/coach) from this middle school may be involved in this research.

I will conduct two interviews with each participating school personnel. Interviews will be audio recorded to ensure the researcher captures the participants' responses accurately. I will also collect some documentation and physical artifacts related to bullying prevention and intervention.

Do you have any questions about the study at this time?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you would like to know more about the study, please take and read through the Participant Consent Form. Interested participants should return the signed Participant Consent Form to the school office. If you have any follow-up questions and/or need clarification, feel free to contact me and I will meet with you in-person. At that time you will be able to sign the Participant Consent Form if you agree to participate in this study.

## APPENDIX F. Teacher Informed Consent Form



University of Illinois at Chicago  
Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research

### Participant Consent Form: General Education and Special Education Teachers

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

**Principal Investigator Name and Title:** Agata Trzaska, Ph.D. Student

**Faculty Sponsor Name and Title:** Elizabeth Talbott, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Special Education

**Department and Institution:** Special Education Department, University of Illinois at Chicago

**Address and Contact Information:** [REDACTED]

**Phone:** [REDACTED] **Email:** atrzas2@uic.edu

#### Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to participate in a research study titled "A Case Study of Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities in Middle School." You have been asked to participate in the research because you are a general education or special education teacher at this middle school, which has implemented Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). You have also been asked to participate because you have worked with and/or supported students with high-incidence disabilities this school year, including youth with Learning Disabilities, Emotional/Behavioral Disorders, mild Intellectual Disabilities, high-functioning Autism, Speech and Language Impairment, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The study involves completing two interviews that ask about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, with respect to students with disabilities. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your employment or relationship with the school where you work or your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Chicago. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Approximately 18 school personnel (4-6 general education teachers, 4-6 special education teachers, 2-3 related services personnel, 1-2 school administrators, 1 PBIS leader/coach) from this middle school may be involved in this research.

### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization of students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework such as PBIS. Bullying affects students with disabilities disproportionately. While there is a large number of bullying prevention and intervention programs for youth in general education, less is known about effective interventions for students with disabilities. Increasingly, bullying scholars propose that bullying prevention and intervention efforts need to be embedded within a multi-tiered preventive framework such as PBIS. By exploring how different school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities, this investigation will provide context for understanding some key factors that hinder or foster effective approach to prevention and intervention for students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework. Taken together, this information may help inform how to prevent and intervene effectively with bullying of students with disabilities. Thus, the proposed study will benefit the research community, policy makers, and practitioners.

### What procedures are involved?

This research will be completed at this middle school. If you agree to participate in this research study, you will continue with your normal daily routines throughout this 2-3 month study. The time you may spend outside of normal instruction time will be during the two interviews that will last between 40-50 minutes. If you agree to participate in the research, the researcher will ask you to do the following things:

- **PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM:** As a prospective subject, you will complete a Participant Background Information Form that will include your age, gender, racial and linguistic background, highest degree attained, type and/or name of teacher education program, current enrollment in college-level coursework or pursuit of a higher degree (if applicable), licensure and endorsements, years of teaching experience, years of employment at the middle school, and a description of your teaching assignment (e.g., subject and grade level, educational setting). This background information about each prospective participant will enable the researcher to: 1) confirm the school personnel's eligibility to participate in the study, 2) recruit school personnel with diverse experiences and perspectives on how they prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities, and 3) describe the subjects who consent and are selected to participate in this study. *If you are not selected to participate in the study, the Participant Background Information Form will be destroyed.*
- **INTERVIEWS:** You will be interviewed two times at your school in your classroom or a location of your choice and convenience. Each interview will take approximately 40-50 minutes to complete, and it will be scheduled at your preferred date and time in the next 2-3 months. Each interview will be audio recorded so that the researcher can access it at a

later time. The researcher will be also taking notes as you respond. You will be asked information about your experiences and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention at this middle school, specifically, as it relates to students with disabilities.

- **PHYSICAL ARTIFACTS:** You will be asked to bring to the second interview a copy of one artifact that represents an example of a classroom anti-bullying activity (e.g., worksheets), informal positive behavioral plans, social stories, visual supports that aimed to prevent bullying or intervene with specific occurrences of bullying. Additionally, the researcher will visit your classroom one time during non-instructional time (e.g., passing period) to take a picture of any school/classroom posters with expected behaviors and/or anti-bullying rules displayed in your classroom.

#### What are the potential risks and discomforts?

There may be risks from the study that are not known at this time. To the best of my knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in your day-to-day activities. Regardless, there is the risk that you may experience the following:

- You may find some of the questions about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, as it relates to students with disabilities, to be sensitive. You will be provided with a copy of interview questions prior to each interview. You may choose not to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable doing.
- During the interviews, you may feel uncomfortable being audio-recorded.
- There is the risk that a breach of privacy (others will know the subject is participating in research) and confidentiality (accidental disclosure of identifiable data) may occur. However, these risks are minimal given the protections that are in place. Every effort will be made to keep the data confidential, and information from the various interviews will not be shared across the interviews. Interview recordings will be removed from any non-UIC site following each interview. All the information you provide is confidential, and any identifying information will be deleted from information disseminated. Your employer will not have access to any of the data. Even if you sign this consent form, you may withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence.

#### Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

This study is not designed to benefit you directly. However, results from this study will describe how school personnel enact bullying prevention and intervention for students with disabilities in a school with a multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention. Taken together, the study results may be used to help other people in the future such as planning how to effectively prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities. Thus, the proposed study will benefit the research community, policy makers, and practitioners.

#### What other options are there?

You have the option to not participate in this study. You do not have to sign this form. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you may skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You are also free to withdraw at any time. If you

decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current position at your school or your relationship with the researcher.

**What about privacy and confidentiality?**

The people who will know that you are a research subject are members of the research team. It is also possible that others in the class and/or at the school, including other school personnel, may know you are participating in the research. Otherwise information about you will only be disclosed to others with your written permission, or if necessary to protect your rights or welfare or if required by law. The UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) and State of Illinois auditors may review research documents to ensure that the researchers are observing ethical and regulatory guidelines. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

Your answers will be confidential and all records of this study will remain private. To ensure your privacy and confidentiality, data will be collected on a password-protected laptop. Each file on the laptop will also be password-protected. At the start of the study, you will be assigned a pseudonym. Participant names will be matched with their pseudonyms. All electronic files will include participant pseudonyms only. Participant names will NOT be stored electronically. A list will be created of the participants with their assigned pseudonyms; this list will be stored separate from the data in a locked file cabinet. Hard copy files and all research documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Any digital files will be assigned your pseudonym and saved on a password protected USB drive and stored in a locked file cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the key to the locked file cabinet. Data collected about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention will remain confidential and will not be linked back to you; therefore, this information will not be used in any way by your principal to evaluate your work or influence your employment. No information will be shared with your employer. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. After the data has been analyzed and evaluated, the electronic data will be kept in password protected files and hard copy data including any artifacts and interview audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet for one year at which point they will be destroyed.

**What are the costs for participating in this research?**

There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

**Will I be paid for my participation in this research?**

You will not be offered payment for being in this study; however, you will receive a \$30 gift card at the end of the study to thank you for your time and commitment.

**Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?**

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

You may contact Agata Trzaska if you have any questions about this study or your part in it. Agata Trzaska can be reached by phone at 8 [REDACTED] or by email at [atrzas2@uic.edu](mailto:atrzas2@uic.edu). You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Elizabeth Talbott by phone at 312-413-8745 or by email at [etalbott@uic.edu](mailto:etalbott@uic.edu).

**What are my rights as a research subject?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free) or e-mail OPRS at [uicirb@uic.edu](mailto:uicirb@uic.edu).

**Remember:**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

**Signature of Subject**

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (must be same as subject's)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

## APPENDIX G. Related Services Personnel Informed Consent Form



**University of Illinois at Chicago  
Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research**

### Participant Consent Form: Related Services Personnel

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

**Principal Investigator Name and Title:** Agata Trzaska, Ph.D. Student

**Faculty Sponsor Name and Title:** Elizabeth Talbott, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Special Education

**Department and Institution:** Special Education Department, University of Illinois at Chicago

**Address and Contact Information:** [REDACTED]

**Phone:** [REDACTED] **Email:** atrzas2@uic.edu

#### Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to participate in a research study titled "A Case Study of Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities in Middle School." You have been asked to participate in the research because you are part of related services personnel at this middle school, including social worker, speech and language pathologist, and/or school psychologist. You have also been asked to participate because you have worked with and/or supported students with high-incidence disabilities this school year, including youth with Learning Disabilities, Emotional/Behavioral Disorders, mild Intellectual Disabilities, high-functioning Autism, Speech and Language Impairment, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The study involves completing an interview that asks about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, with respect to students with disabilities. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your employment or relationship with the school where you work or your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Chicago. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Approximately 18 school personnel (4-6 general education teachers, 4-6 special education teachers, 2-3 related services personnel, 1-2 school administrators, 1 PBIS leader/coach) from this middle school may be involved in this research.

### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization of students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework such as PBIS. Bullying affects students with disabilities disproportionately. While there is a large number of bullying prevention and intervention programs for youth in general education, less is known about effective interventions for students with disabilities. Increasingly, bullying scholars propose that bullying prevention and intervention efforts need to be embedded within a multi-tiered preventive framework such as PBIS. By exploring how different school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities, this investigation will provide context for understanding some key factors that hinder or foster effective approach to prevention and intervention for students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework. Taken together, this information may help inform how to prevent and intervene effectively with bullying of students with disabilities. Thus, the proposed study will benefit the research community, policy makers, and practitioners.

### What procedures are involved?

This research will be completed at this middle school. If you agree to participate in this research study, you will continue with your normal daily routines throughout this 2-3 month study. The time you may spend outside of normal instruction time will be during the two interviews that will last between 40-50 minutes. If you agree to participate in the research, the researcher will ask you to do the following things:

- **PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM:** As a prospective subject, you will complete a Participant Background Information Form that will include your age, gender, racial and linguistic background, highest degree attained, type and/or name of teacher education program, current enrollment in college-level coursework or pursuit of a higher degree (if applicable), licensure and endorsements, years of teaching experience, years of employment at the middle school, and a description of your teaching assignment (e.g., subject and grade level, educational setting). This background information about each prospective participant will enable the researcher to: 1) confirm the school personnel's eligibility to participate in the study, 2) recruit school personnel with diverse experiences and perspectives on how they prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities, and 3) describe the subjects who consent and are selected to participate in this study. *If you are not selected to participate in the study, the Participant Background Information Form will be destroyed.*
- **INTERVIEWS:** You will be interviewed two times at your school in your classroom, office, or a location of your choice and convenience. Each interview will take approximately 40-50 minutes to complete, and it will be scheduled at your preferred date and time in the next 2-3 months. Each interview will be audio recorded so that the researcher can access it at a later time. The researcher will be also taking notes as you respond. You will be asked information about your experiences and perspective on

bullying prevention and intervention at this middle school, specifically, as it relates to students with disabilities.

#### **What are the potential risks and discomforts?**

There may be risks from the study that are not known at this time. To the best of my knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in your day-to-day activities. Regardless, there is the risk that you may experience the following:

- You may find some of the questions about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, as it relates to students with disabilities, to be sensitive. You will be provided with a copy of interview questions prior to each interview. You may choose not to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable doing.
- During the interviews, you may feel uncomfortable being audio-recorded.
- There is the risk that a breach of privacy (others will know the subject is participating in research) and confidentiality (accidental disclosure of identifiable data) may occur. However, these risks are minimal given the protections that are in place. Every effort will be made to keep the data confidential, and information from the various interviews will not be shared across the interviews. Interview recordings will be removed from any non-UIC site following each interview. All the information you provide is confidential, and any identifying information will be deleted from information disseminated. Your employer will not have access to any of the data. Even if you sign this consent form, you may withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence.

#### **Are there benefits to taking part in the research?**

This study is not designed to benefit you directly. However, results from this study will describe how school personnel enact bullying prevention and intervention for students with disabilities in a school with a multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention. Taken together, the study results may be used to help other people in the future such as planning how to effectively prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities. Thus, the proposed study will benefit the research community, policy makers, and practitioners.

#### **What other options are there?**

You have the option to not participate in this study. You do not have to sign this form. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you may skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You are also free to withdraw at any time. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current position at your school or your relationship with the researcher.

#### **What about privacy and confidentiality?**

The people who will know that you are a research subject are members of the research team. It is also possible that others in the class and/or at the school, including other school personnel, may know you are participating in the research. Otherwise information about you will only be disclosed to others with your written permission, or if necessary to protect your rights or welfare

or if required by law. The UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) and State of Illinois auditors may review research documents to ensure that the researchers are observing ethical and regulatory guidelines. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

Your answers will be confidential and all records of this study will remain private. To ensure your privacy and confidentiality, data will be collected on a password-protected laptop. Each file on the laptop will also be password-protected. At the start of the study, you will be assigned a pseudonym. Participant names will be matched with their pseudonyms. All electronic files will include participant pseudonyms only. Participant names will NOT be stored electronically. A list will be created of the participants with their assigned pseudonyms; this list will be stored separate from the data in a locked file cabinet. Hard copy files and all research documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the key to the locked file cabinet. Data collected about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention will remain confidential and will not be linked back to you; therefore, this information will not be used in any way by your principal to evaluate your work or influence your employment. No information will be shared with your employer. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. After the data has been analyzed and evaluated, the electronic data will be kept in password protected files and hard copy data including any artifacts and interview audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet for one year at which point they will be destroyed.

**What are the costs for participating in this research?**

There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

**Will I be paid for my participation in this research?**

You will not be offered payment for being in this study; however, you will receive a \$30 gift card at the end of the study to thank you for your time and commitment.

**Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?**

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

You may contact Agata Trzaska if you have any questions about this study or your part in it. Agata Trzaska can be reached by phone at [REDACTED] or by email at [atrzas2@uic.edu](mailto:atrzas2@uic.edu). You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Elizabeth Talbott by phone at 312-413-8745 or by email at [etalbott@uic.edu](mailto:etalbott@uic.edu).

**What are my rights as a research subject?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free) or e-mail OPRS at [uicirb@uic.edu](mailto:uicirb@uic.edu).

**Remember:**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

**Signature of Subject**

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (must be same as subject's)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

## APPENDIX H. School Administrators Informed Consent Form



University of Illinois at Chicago  
Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research

### Participant Consent Form: School Administrators

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

**Principal Investigator Name and Title:** Agata Trzaska, Ph.D. Student

**Faculty Sponsor Name and Title:** Elizabeth Talbott, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Special Education

**Department and Institution:** Special Education Department, University of Illinois at Chicago

**Address and Contact Information:** [REDACTED]

**Phone:** [REDACTED] **Email:** atrzas2@uic.edu

#### Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to participate in a research study titled "A Case Study of Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities in Middle School." You have been asked to participate in the research because you are one of the administrators at this middle school and you are responsible for responding to bullying incidents. The study involves completing two interviews that ask about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, with respect to students with disabilities. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your employment or relationship with the school where you work or your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Chicago. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Approximately 18 school personnel (4-6 general education teachers, 4-6 special education teachers, 2-3 related services personnel, 1-2 school administrators, 1 PBIS leader/coach) from this middle school may be involved in this research.

#### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization of students with disabilities in a middle school within a

multi-tiered framework such as PBIS. Bullying affects students with disabilities disproportionately. While there is a large number of bullying prevention and intervention programs for youth in general education, less is known about effective interventions for students with disabilities. Increasingly, bullying scholars propose that bullying prevention and intervention efforts need to be embedded within a multi-tiered preventive framework such as PBIS. By exploring how different school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities, this investigation will provide context for understanding some key factors that hinder or foster effective approach to prevention and intervention for students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework. Taken together, this information may help inform how to prevent and intervene effectively with bullying of students with disabilities. Thus, the proposed study will benefit the research community, policy makers, and practitioners.

### What procedures are involved?

This research will be completed at this middle school. If you agree to participate in this research study, you will continue with your normal daily routines throughout this 2-3 month study. The time you may spend outside of normal instruction time will be during the two interviews that will last between 40-50 minutes. If you agree to participate in the research, the researcher will ask you to do the following things:

- **PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM:** As a prospective subject, you will complete a Participant Background Information Form that will include your age, gender, racial and linguistic background, highest degree attained, type and/or name of teacher education program, current enrollment in college-level coursework or pursuit of a higher degree (if applicable), licensure and endorsements, years of teaching experience, years of employment at the middle school, and a description of your teaching assignment (e.g., subject and grade level, educational setting). This background information about each prospective participant will enable the researcher to: 1) confirm the school personnel's eligibility to participate in the study, 2) recruit school personnel with diverse experiences and perspectives on how they prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities, and 3) describe the subjects who consent and are selected to participate in this study. *If you are not selected to participate in the study, the Participant Background Information Form will be destroyed.*
- **INTERVIEWS:** You will be interviewed two times at your school in your office or a location of your choice and convenience. Each interview will take approximately 40-50 minutes to complete, and it will be scheduled at your preferred date and time in the next 2-3 months. Each interview will be audio recorded so that the researcher can access it at a later time. The researcher will be also taking notes as you respond. You will be asked information about your experiences and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention at this middle school, specifically, as it relates to students with disabilities.

### What are the potential risks and discomforts?

There may be risks from the study that are not known at this time. To the best of my knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in your day-to-day activities. Regardless, there is the risk that you may experience the following:

- You may find some of the questions about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, as it relates to students with disabilities, to be sensitive. You will be provided with a copy of interview questions prior to each interview. You may choose not to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable doing.
- During the interviews, you may feel uncomfortable being audio-recorded.
- There is the risk that a breach of privacy (others will know the subject is participating in research) and confidentiality (accidental disclosure of identifiable data) may occur. However, these risks are minimal given the protections that are in place. Every effort will be made to keep the data confidential, and information from the various interviews will not be shared across the interviews. Interview recordings will be removed from any non-UIC site following each interview. All the information you provide is confidential, and any identifying information will be deleted from information disseminated. Your employer will not have access to any of the data. Even if you sign this consent form, you may withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence.

#### **Are there benefits to taking part in the research?**

This study is not designed to benefit you directly. However, results from this study will describe how school personnel enact bullying prevention and intervention for students with disabilities in a school with a multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention. Taken together, the study results may be used to help other people in the future such as planning how to effectively prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities. Thus, the proposed study will benefit the research community, policy makers, and practitioners.

#### **What other options are there?**

You have the option to not participate in this study. You do not have to sign this form. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you may skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You are also free to withdraw at any time. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current position at your school or your relationship with the researcher.

#### **What about privacy and confidentiality?**

The people who will know that you are a research subject are members of the research team. It is also possible that others in the class and/or at the school, including other school personnel, may know you are participating in the research. Otherwise information about you will only be disclosed to others with your written permission, or if necessary to protect your rights or welfare or if required by law. The UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) and State of Illinois auditors may review research documents to ensure that the researchers are observing ethical and regulatory guidelines. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

Your answers will be confidential and all records of this study will remain private. To ensure your privacy and confidentiality, data will be collected on a password-protected laptop. Each file on the laptop will also be password-protected. At the start of the study, you will be assigned a pseudonym. Participant names will be matched with their pseudonyms. All electronic files will include participant pseudonyms only. Participant names will NOT be stored electronically. A list will be created of the participants with their assigned pseudonyms; this list will be stored separate from the data in a locked file cabinet. Hard copy files and all research documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the key to the locked file cabinet. Data collected about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention will remain confidential and will not be linked back to you; therefore, this information will not be used in any way by your principal to evaluate your work or influence your employment. No information will be shared with your employer. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. After the data has been analyzed and evaluated, the electronic data will be kept in password protected files and hard copy data including any artifacts and interview audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet for one year at which point they will be destroyed.

**What are the costs for participating in this research?**

There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

**Will I be paid for my participation in this research?**

You will not be offered payment for being in this study; however, you will receive a \$30 gift card at the end of the study to thank you for your time and commitment.

**Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?**

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

You may contact Agata Trzaska if you have any questions about this study or your part in it. Agata Trzaska can be reached by phone at [REDACTED] or by email at [atrzas2@uic.edu](mailto:atrzas2@uic.edu). You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Elizabeth Talbott by phone at 312-413-8745 or by email at [etalbott@uic.edu](mailto:etalbott@uic.edu).

**What are my rights as a research subject?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free) or e-mail OPRS at [uicirb@uic.edu](mailto:uicirb@uic.edu).

**Remember:**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

**Signature of Subject**

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (must be same as subject's)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

## APPENDIX I. PBIS Coach/Leader Informed Consent Form



University of Illinois at Chicago  
Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research

### Participant Consent Form: PBIS Leader/Coach

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

**Principal Investigator Name and Title:** Agata Trzaska, Ph.D. Student

**Faculty Sponsor Name and Title:** Elizabeth Talbott, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Special Education

**Department and Institution:** Special Education Department, University of Illinois at Chicago

**Address and Contact Information:** [REDACTED]

**Phone:** [REDACTED] **Email:** atrzas2@uic.edu

#### Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to participate in a research study titled "A Case Study of Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities in Middle School." You have been asked to participate in the research because you are a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) leader/coach at this middle school. The study involves completing two interviews that ask about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, with respect to students with disabilities. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your employment or relationship with the school where you work or your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Chicago. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Approximately 18 school personnel (4-6 general education teachers, 4-6 special education teachers, 2-3 related services providers, 1-2 school administrators, 1 PBIS leader/coach) from this middle school may be involved in this research.

#### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization of students with disabilities in a middle school within a

multi-tiered framework such as PBIS. Bullying affects students with disabilities disproportionately. While there is a large number of bullying prevention and intervention programs for youth in general education, less is known about effective interventions for students with disabilities. Increasingly, bullying scholars propose that bullying prevention and intervention efforts need to be embedded within a multi-tiered preventive framework such as PBIS. By exploring how different school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities, this investigation will provide context for understanding some key factors that hinder or foster effective approach to prevention and intervention for students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework. Taken together, this information may help inform how to prevent and intervene effectively with bullying of students with disabilities. Thus, the proposed study will benefit the research community, policy makers, and practitioners.

### What procedures are involved?

This research will be completed at this middle school. If you agree to participate in this research study, you will continue with your normal daily routines throughout this 2-3 month study. The time you may spend outside of normal instruction time will be during the two interviews that will last between 40-50 minutes. If you agree to participate in the research, the researcher will ask you to do the following things:

- **PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM:** As a prospective subject, you will complete a Participant Background Information Form that will include your age, gender, racial and linguistic background, highest degree attained, type and/or name of teacher education program, current enrollment in college-level coursework or pursuit of a higher degree (if applicable), licensure and endorsements, years of teaching experience, years of employment at the middle school, and a description of your teaching assignment (e.g., subject and grade level, educational setting). This background information about each prospective participant will enable the researcher to: 1) confirm the school personnel's eligibility to participate in the study, 2) recruit school personnel with diverse experiences and perspectives on how they prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities, and 3) describe the subjects who consent and are selected to participate in this study. *If you are not selected to participate in the study, the Participant Background Information Form will be destroyed.*
- **INTERVIEWS:** You will be interviewed two times at your school in your office or a location of your choice and convenience. Each interview will take approximately 40-50 minutes to complete, and it will be scheduled at your preferred date and time in the next 2-3 months. Each interview will be audio recorded so that the researcher can access it at a later time. The researcher will be also taking notes as you respond. You will be asked information about your experiences and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention at this middle school, specifically, as it relates to students with disabilities.
- **DOCUMENTATION:** If available, you will be asked to bring to the second interview results from a school-wide climate survey, results from a bullying survey, and monthly reports of Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) since the beginning of the school year.

- **PHYSICAL ARTIFACTS:** If available, you will be asked to bring to the second interview a copy of behavior matrix, entrance and exit criteria for social/academic instructional groups (SAIG), and a blank form of Office Discipline Referrals.

#### **What are the potential risks and discomforts?**

There may be risks from the study that are not known at this time. To the best of my knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in your day-to-day activities. Regardless, there is the risk that you may experience the following:

- You may find some of the questions about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, as it relates to students with disabilities, to be sensitive. You will be provided with a copy of interview questions prior to each interview. You may choose not to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable doing.
- During the interviews, you may feel uncomfortable being audio-recorded.
- There is the risk that a breach of privacy (others will know the subject is participating in research) and confidentiality (accidental disclosure of identifiable data) may occur. However, these risks are minimal given the protections that are in place. Every effort will be made to keep the data confidential, and information from the various interviews will not be shared across the interviews. Interview recordings will be removed from any non-UIC site following each interview. All the information you provide is confidential, and any identifying information will be deleted from information disseminated. Your employer will not have access to any of the data. Even if you sign this consent form, you may withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence.

#### **Are there benefits to taking part in the research?**

This study is not designed to benefit you directly. However, results from this study will describe how school personnel enact bullying prevention and intervention for students with disabilities in a school with a multi-tiered framework of prevention and intervention. Taken together, the study results may be used to help other people in the future such as planning how to effectively prevent and intervene with bullying of students with disabilities. Thus, the proposed study will benefit the research community, policy makers, and practitioners.

#### **What other options are there?**

You have the option to not participate in this study. You do not have to sign this form. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you may skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You are also free to withdraw at any time. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current position at your school or your relationship with the researcher.

#### **What about privacy and confidentiality?**

The people who will know that you are a research subject are members of the research team. It is also possible that others in the class and/or at the school, including other school personnel,

may know you are participating in the research. Otherwise information about you will only be disclosed to others with your written permission, or if necessary to protect your rights or welfare or if required by law. The UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) and State of Illinois auditors may review research documents to ensure that the researchers are observing ethical and regulatory guidelines. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

Your answers will be confidential and all records of this study will remain private. To ensure your privacy and confidentiality, data will be collected on a password-protected laptop. Each file on the laptop will also be password-protected. At the start of the study, you will be assigned a pseudonym. Participant names will be matched with their pseudonyms. All electronic files will include participant pseudonyms only. Participant names will NOT be stored electronically. A list will be created of the participants with their assigned pseudonyms; this list will be stored separate from the data in a locked file cabinet. Hard copy files and all research documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Any digital files will be assigned your pseudonym and saved on a password protected USB drive and stored in a locked file cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the key to the locked file cabinet. Data collected about your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention will remain confidential and will not be linked back to you; therefore, this information will not be used in any way by your principal to evaluate your work or influence your employment. No information will be shared with your employer. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. After the data has been analyzed and evaluated, the electronic data will be kept in password protected files and hard copy data including any artifacts and interview audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet for one year at which point they will be destroyed.

**What are the costs for participating in this research?**

There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

**Will I be paid for my participation in this research?**

You will not be offered payment for being in this study; however, you will receive a \$30 gift card at the end of the study to thank you for your time and commitment.

**Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?**

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

You may contact Agata Trzaska if you have any questions about this study or your part in it. Agata Trzaska can be reached by phone at 8 [REDACTED] or by email at [atrzas2@uic.edu](mailto:atrzas2@uic.edu). You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Elizabeth Talbott by phone at 312-413-8745 or by email at [etalbott@uic.edu](mailto:etalbott@uic.edu).

**What are my rights as a research subject?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free) or e-mail OPRS at [uicirb@uic.edu](mailto:uicirb@uic.edu).

**Remember:**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

**Signature of Subject**

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (must be same as subject's)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

## APPENDIX J. School Personnel Recruitment: Study Reminder



~Friendly Reminder~

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY:**

#### **“Bullying Prevention and Intervention**

#### **for Students With Disabilities in Middle School”**

My name is Agata Trzaska and I am a PhD student in the Department of Special Education at University of Illinois at Chicago. I am conducting a research study to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization of students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework such as Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS).

**Certified school personnel, including general education teachers, special education teachers, social workers, speech and language therapists, school psychologists, assistant principals, principal, and PBIS leader/coach, may be involved in this study.**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you would like to volunteer to participate in this study, please sign the Participant Consent Form that I have distributed at the recent staff/teacher meeting.

I will be at the school on \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ in Room \_\_\_\_\_. You may return your Participant Consent Form directly to me at that time.

If you prefer to meet in person to ask additional questions about this research study or you would like to request a new copy of the Participant Consent Form feel free to contact me.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Agata Trzaska, Ph.D. Student

Phone: 8 [REDACTED] Email: atrzas2@uic.edu

Department and Institution: Special Education Department, University of Illinois at Chicago

Faculty Sponsor Name and Title: Elizabeth Talbott, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Special Education

*If you are eligible and agree to participate in the research, you will receive a \$30 Gift Card for your time and effort.*

*Thank you!*

## APPENDIX K. Recruitment Log

[illegible]

## APPENDIX L. Email to Recruit Additional Participants



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Agata Trzaska and I am a PhD student in the Department of Special Education at University of Illinois at Chicago. I am conducting a research study titled "A Case Study of Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities in Middle School." This research study aims to describe how school personnel prevent and intervene with bullying perpetration and victimization of students with disabilities in a middle school within a multi-tiered framework such as Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS).

**I currently seek more volunteers for this research study. Certified school personnel, including general education teachers, special education teachers, social workers, speech and language therapists, school psychologists, assistant principals, principal, and PBIS leader/coach, may be involved in this study.**

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in two 40-50 minute-long interviews to share your experiences with and perspective on bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, with respect to students with disabilities. I will also collect some documentation and physical artifacts related to bullying prevention and intervention.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you would like to volunteer to participate in this study, please feel free to contact me. In appreciation of your time, you will receive a \$30 Gift Card if you are eligible and agree to participate in the research.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Agata Trzaska, Ph.D. Student

Phone: [REDACTED] Email: atrzas2@uic.edu

Department and Institution: Special Education Department, University of Illinois at Chicago

Faculty Sponsor Name and Title: Elizabeth Talbott, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Special Education

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Agata Trzaska

**APPENDIX M. Notification Email about Enrollment in the Study**

*Dear \_\_\_\_\_,*

*I wanted to confirm that I received your signed Participant Consent Form. You have been selected to participate in this research study, and I would like to schedule a brief (10-15 minutes) meeting to enroll you in the study. During this meeting, I will do the following: 1) provide you with a copy of your signed consent, 2) assign you a pseudonym that from now on will be used to mark any data collected from you, and 3) complete a Participant Background Information Form, and 4) schedule two interviews that are part of this research study.*

*Please let me know the preferred time and location when we could meet within the next week to complete your enrollment in this research study.*

*Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. I look forward to getting to know you.*

*Thank you,  
Agata Trzaska*

**APPENDIX N. Notification Email about Non-Enrollment in the Study**

*Dear \_\_\_\_\_,*

*I received your signed Participant Consent Form; however, upon reviewing the inclusion criteria for participation in this research study, I needed to select other school personnel. Thus, your Participant Consent Form will be destroyed immediately.*

*I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this research study.*

*Sincerely,*

*Agata Trzaska*

## APPENDIX O. Enrollment Log

[illegible]

## APPENDIX P. Participant Demographic Information

### Participant Demographic Information

---

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your current role at this school:

General Education Teacher ☐ Subjects/classes taught: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade levels taught: \_\_\_\_\_

This school year, I have had students with disabilities included in my classes (circle).      Yes      No

Special Education Teacher ☐ Subjects/classes taught: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade levels taught: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructional settings (circle):      General Education/Push-in      Resource  
Self-Contained

Social Worker ☐ Grade levels supported: \_\_\_\_\_

Speech/Language Pathologist ☐ Grade levels supported: \_\_\_\_\_

School Psychologist ☐

Assistant Principal ☐ Grade levels supported: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal ☐

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_ Language(s) spoken (if other than English): \_\_\_\_\_

Highest degree attained: \_\_\_\_\_

Type and/or name of teacher education program: \_\_\_\_\_

Current enrollment in college-level coursework or pursuit of a higher degree (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

List your licensure and endorsements: \_\_\_\_\_

Years teaching overall: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years teaching at current school: \_\_\_\_\_

Committees or other additional roles at current school: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX Q. Interview 1 Protocol for Each Participant

Interviewee's Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Opening Statement:** *This is Agata Trzaska speaking with (interviewee's pseudonym). Thank you for taking this time to be interviewed. This interview will be audio recorded so that I can access it at a later time. I am also going to be taking notes as you respond. I will ask you questions about bullying prevention and intervention in this school with the specific focus on students with disabilities. Please let me know if you need anything restated or if you have any questions about what I am asking you. If you come to a question you would prefer not to answer, please let me know and we will move on.*

- 1) **Main Question:** To what extent do you think bullying is a problem at this school? Why or why not?
  - a) **Follow-up Question:** To what extent are students with disabilities affected by bullying at this school as victims, bullies, or bully-victims (a bullied student starts bullying others)?
  - b) **Follow-up Question:** Tell me about any specific instances of bullying involving students with disabilities that you have dealt with this school year?
- 2) **Main Question:** Let's talk about your school anti-bullying policy. What are some key elements and/or procedures included in the school anti-bullying policy that school personnel implement when responding to bullying?
  - a) **Follow-up Question:** Is there anything that needs to be improved with respect to the school-anti-bullying policy?
- 3) **Main Question:** Let's talk now about bullying prevention and intervention. What interventions does this school utilize to prevent and intervene with bullying?
  - a) **Follow-up Question:** How do school personnel respond to bullying when a student with disability is involved in bullying either as a bully, victim, or bully-victim?
- 4) **Main Question:** What elements of bullying prevention and intervention utilized at this school do you consider most and least effective? Why is that?
- 5) **Main Question:** From your perspective, to what extent bullying prevention and intervention efforts are integrated and aligned with PBIS at this school?
  - a) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): What components of PBIS are clearly linked with bullying prevention and intervention?
- 6) **Main Question:** Now, I would like to ask about how you respond to bullying. First, tell me how you define "bullying."

- a) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): How do you differentiate “bullying” from other problem behaviors?
- 7) **Main Question:** What do you do when a bullying incident is reported to you?
- a) **Follow-up Question:** How is your response to bullying similar or different when a student with disabilities is involved as a victim, a bully, or a bully-victim (a bullied student starts bullying others)?
- 8) **Main Question:** Now, for you personally, describe professional development workshops, conferences, presentations, etc. in which you learned about bullying prevention and intervention.
- a) **Follow-up Question:** How would you describe your expertise with bullying prevention and intervention?
  - b) **Follow-up Question:** What additional supports, tools, or training do you think you may need to further prevent and intervene with bullying particularly of students with disabilities at this school?
- 9) **Main Question:** When you reflect on what we’ve discussed, is there anything else that could be done at this school to ensure effective bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, for students with disabilities?

**Researcher final statement:** *Thank you for sharing your perspective on bullying prevention and intervention. I appreciate your time and value your responses.*

## APPENDIX R. Interview 2 Protocol for General and Special Education Teachers

Interviewee's Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Opening Statement:** *This is Agata Trzaska speaking with (interviewee's pseudonym). Thank you for taking this time to be interviewed. This interview will be audio recorded so that I can access it at a later time. I am also going to be taking notes as you respond. I will ask you a few questions about bullying prevention and intervention in this school with the specific focus on students with disabilities. Please let me know if you need anything restated or if you have any questions about what I am asking you. If you come to a question you would prefer not to answer, please let me know and we will move on.*

*First, I will ask you a few questions related to three hypothetical scenarios that include students with disabilities involved in bullying. Please read the hypothetical scenario 1.*

### HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO 1

Luis is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader with high-functioning autism who participates in general education classes with some special education push-in support. He has several narrow interests that make him appear socially naïve for his age. Within the classroom setting, Luis is usually the last one to be picked as a partner for group discussions and projects. He tends to sit by himself in the school cafeteria. Luis has difficulty reading social cues and understanding when he is being teased. A student has just reported to you that two boys have been making fun of Luis and are calling him derogatory names in a P.E. locker room. These two students tease Luis almost every day.

- 1) **Main Question:** If you found out about this situation tomorrow, walk me through what would happen.
  - a) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): How would *you* specifically respond to this bullying incident?
- 2) **Main Question:** From your perspective and experience with similar scenarios, what elements of bullying prevention and intervention (e.g., specific programs, strategies, practices) could be utilized with Luis given that he is a student with high-functioning autism?
  - a) **Follow-up Question:** Can you think of any additional protocols or interventions that would be implemented at the system-level to prevent and/or intervene with bullying of Luis?

*Please read the hypothetical scenario 2.*

### HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO 2

Dwayne is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader who receives special education under the primary eligibility of emotional behavioral disability due to a high level of aggression. He is known to have been bullied on and off throughout middle school by some older boys and his sibling. A few bus riders reported that Dwayne has been threatening to beat up a 6<sup>th</sup> grade boy on the bus, and this has been going on for several weeks.

- 3) **Main Question:** If you found out about this situation tomorrow, walk me through what would happen.
  - a) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): How would *you* specifically respond to this bullying incident?
- 4) **Main Question:** From your perspective and experience with similar scenarios, what elements of bullying prevention and intervention (e.g., specific programs, strategies, practices) could be utilized with Dwayne given that he is a student with an emotional behavioral disability?
  - a) **Follow-up Question:** Can you think of any additional protocols or interventions that would be implemented at the system-level to prevent and/or intervene with bullying of Dwayne?

*Please read the hypothetical scenario 3.*

### **HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO 3**

Skylar is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader with a learning disability and she receives special education support in reading and math. Socially, Skylar has a history of difficulties developing and maintaining positive peer relations. She wants to be popular with a “cool” group of girls. You just found that one of these “cool” girls made humiliating posts about Skylar on social media.

Reluctantly, Skylar has also revealed that this girl has been pressuring Skylar to share her Instagram password and threatening to exclude her from the group if she doesn’t comply.

- 5) **Main Question:** If you found out about this situation tomorrow, walk me through what would happen.
  - a) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): How would *you* specifically respond to this bullying incident?
- 6) **Main Question:** From your perspective and experience with similar scenarios, what elements of bullying prevention and intervention (e.g., specific programs, strategies, practices) could be utilized with Skylar given that she is a student with a learning disability?
  - a) **Follow-up Question:** Can you think of any additional protocols or interventions that would be implemented at the system-level to prevent and/or intervene with bullying of Skylar?

*Now, let’s talk about the artifact you selected to share with me.*

- 7) **Main Question:** What was the purpose of this activity?
- 8) **Main Question:** How did you incorporate this activity into your instruction?
- 9) **Main Question:** Describe the link between this activity and bullying prevention and intervention.
- 10) **Main Question:** Were any students with disabilities included during this activity? If yes, how did they respond to it?

**Researcher final statement:** *Thank you for sharing your perspective on bullying prevention and intervention. I appreciate your time and value your responses.*

## APPENDIX S. Interview 2 Protocol for Related Services Personnel and School Administrators

Interviewee's Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Opening Statement:** *This is Agata Trzaska speaking with (interviewee's pseudonym). Thank you for taking this time to be interviewed. This interview will be audio recorded so that I can access it at a later time. I am also going to be taking notes as you respond. I will ask you a few questions related to three hypothetical scenarios that include students with disabilities involved in bullying. Please let me know if you need anything restated or if you have any questions about what I am asking you. If you come to a question you would prefer not to answer, please let me know and we will move on.*

*Please read the hypothetical scenario 1.*

### **HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO 1**

Luis is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader with high-functioning autism who participates in general education classes with some special education push-in support. He has several narrow interests that make him appear socially naïve for his age. Within the classroom setting, Luis is usually the last one to be picked as a partner for group discussions and projects. He tends to sit by himself in the school cafeteria. Luis has difficulty reading social cues and understanding when he is being teased. A student has just reported to you that two boys have been making fun of Luis and are calling him derogatory names in a P.E. locker room. These two students tease Luis almost every day.

11) **Main Question:** If you found out about this situation tomorrow, walk me through what would happen.

a) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): How would *you* specifically respond to this bullying incident?

12) **Main Question:** From your perspective and experience with similar scenarios, what elements of bullying prevention and intervention (e.g., specific programs, strategies, practices) could be utilized with Luis given that he is a student with high-functioning autism?

a) **Follow-up Question:** Can you think of any additional protocols or interventions that would be implemented at the system-level to prevent and/or intervene with bullying of Luis?

*Please read the hypothetical scenario 2.*

### **HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO 2**

Dwayne is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader who receives special education under the primary eligibility of emotional behavioral disability due to a high level of aggression. He is known to have been bullied on and off throughout middle school by some older boys and his sibling. A few bus riders reported that Dwayne has been threatening to beat up a 6<sup>th</sup>-grade boy on the bus, and this has been going on for several weeks.

- 13) **Main Question:** If you found out about this situation tomorrow, walk me through what would happen.
- a) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): How would *you* specifically respond to this bullying incident?
- 14) **Main Question:** From your perspective and experience with similar scenarios, what elements of bullying prevention and intervention (e.g., specific programs, strategies, practices) could be utilized with Dwayne given that he is a student with an emotional behavioral disability?
- a) **Follow-up Question:** Can you think of any additional protocols or interventions that would be implemented at the system-level to prevent and/or intervene with bullying of Dwayne?

*Please read the hypothetical scenario 3.*

### **HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO 3**

Skylar is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader with a learning disability and she receives special education support in reading and math. Socially, Skylar has a history of difficulties developing and maintaining positive peer relations. She wants to be popular with a “cool” group of girls. You just found that one of these “cool” girls made humiliating posts about Skylar on social media. Reluctantly, Skylar has also revealed that this girl has been pressuring Skylar to share her Instagram password and threatening to exclude her from the group if she doesn’t comply.

- 15) **Main Question:** If you found out about this situation tomorrow, walk me through what would happen.
- a) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): How would *you* specifically respond to this bullying incident?
- 16) **Main Question:** From your perspective and experience with similar scenarios, what elements of bullying prevention and intervention (e.g., specific programs, strategies, practices) could be utilized with Skylar given that she is a student with a learning disability?
- a) **Follow-up Question:** Can you think of any additional protocols or interventions that would be implemented at the system-level to prevent and/or intervene with bullying of Skylar?

**Researcher final statement:** *Thank you for sharing your perspective on bullying prevention and intervention. I appreciate your time and value your responses.*

## APPENDIX T. Interview 2 Protocol for PBIS Coach/Leader

Interviewee's Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Opening Statement:** *This is Agata Trzaska speaking with (interviewee's pseudonym). Thank you for taking this time to be interviewed. This interview will be audio recorded so that I can access it at a later time. I am also going to be taking notes as you respond. We will continue to discuss bullying prevention and intervention, specifically, with respect to students with disabilities. I will ask you a few questions about the documents and physical artifacts that I asked you to share with me. The documents we will discuss (if available) include results from the school climate survey, results from an anti-bullying survey, and monthly office discipline referrals (ODRs). The physical artifacts (if available) that we will discuss include the behavior matrix, ODR blank form, and entrance and exit criteria for social/academic instructional groups. Please let me know if you need anything restated or if you have any questions about what I am asking you. If you come to a question you would prefer not to answer, please let me know and we will move on.*

- 1) **Main Question:** Let's start by discussing the behavior matrix. What are the school-wide rules and/or behaviors expected at various locations of this school?
  - a) **Follow-up Question:** Do any of these school-wide rules/expectations pertain to bullying?
  - b) **Follow-up Question:** How are these school-wide rules/expectations taught and reinforced by the school personnel?
- 2) **Main Question:** Now, tell me about the results from the school climate assessment that was conducted this year.
  - a) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): How would you describe the school climate specifically as it pertains to bullying?
  - b) **Follow-up Question:** Did students with disabilities participate in this school climate assessment?
- 3) **Main Question:** Tell me about the results from the bullying survey conducted this year.
  - a) **Follow-up Question:** Do you see any patterns?
  - b) **Follow-up Question:** Did students with disabilities participate in this survey?
- 4) **Main Question:** Let's now discuss the monthly ODR reports. What are the main patterns that you've seen this year?
  - a) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): What are the main problem behaviors?
  - b) **Follow-up Question** (if necessary): What are the main locations in which these problem behaviors are occurring?
- 5) **Main Question:** Let's take a look at the blank form of ODRs used by the school personnel at this school. Who is expected to complete this ODR form and when?
  - a) **Follow-up Question:** Is this ODR form used to report and/or document any bullying

behaviors?

- b) **Follow-up Question:** Is this ODR form used when students with disabilities demonstrate any bullying behaviors?
- 6) **Main Question:** Tell me about the entrance and exit criteria for social/academic instructional groups.
  - a) **Follow-up Questions:** To your best knowledge, have any of these social/academic instructional groups been used this school year when a student with disabilities was involved in bullying as either a victim, bully, or bully-victim (a bullied student starts bullying others)?
- 7) **Main Question:** Can you think of any additional protocols or interventions that could be implemented at the system-level to prevent and/or intervene with bullying of students with disabilities?

**Researcher final statement:** *Thank you for sharing your perspective on bullying prevention and intervention. I appreciate your time and value your responses.*

## APPENDIX U. Data Collection Log

Microsoft Excel window: Data Collection Log 201701019.xlsx

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Home Layout Tables Charts SmartArt Formulas Data Review

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	A	B	C	D	E	F
	School Personnel Pseudonym	School Personnel Position	Date of Data Collection	What type of data was collected?	Where is it saved and/or stored?	Notes/Follow-ups
1						
2						
3						
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## APPENDIX V. First Cycle Coding

### First Cycle Coding: Definitions of Codes

#### Abbreviations:

BPI = Bullying Prevention and Intervention; HF-Autism = High Functioning Autism; LD = Learning Disabilities; PBIS = Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports; SWD = Students with Disabilities

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
1	BULLYING DEFINITION	Elemental Methods: Descriptive Coding	<p>A descriptive code includes a word (e.g., noun) or phrase that summarizes a segment of text or visual data.</p> <p>This code captures the participant's definition of bullying.</p>	<i>"I would say bullying is where a student is exerting some sort of power over another student for a longer period of time. It's persistent and ongoing, but it's where a student in power is making another student feel inferior or challenging their self-worth over an extended period of time."</i>
2	BULLYING AS A PROBLEM	Affective Methods: Values Coding	<p>A value code depicts the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs.</p> <p>This code captures the participant's perception of the extent to which bullying is a problem at this middle school.</p>	<i>"I believe it happens. I'm not naïve to think that it doesn't happen at this school at all. I don't think it's a very big problem, but I do believe it happens."</i>
3	FORMS OF BULLYING	Elemental Methods: Descriptive Coding	<p>A descriptive code includes a word (e.g., noun) or phrase that summarizes a segment of text or visual data.</p>	<i>"But, when I think about this year, I think most of the bullying nowadays is through social media."</i>

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
			This code includes various forms/types of bullying through which students at this middle school engage in bullying perpetration and victimization. This may include cyberbullying, verbal bullying, physical bullying, and social bullying (exclusion). If the participant discusses SWD being bullied or bullying others, please code it under SWD AFFECTED BY BULLYING.	
4	SWD AFFECTED BY BULLYING	Affective Methods: Values Coding	<p>A value code depicts the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs.</p> <p>This code will include the participant's perception (based on his or her personal knowledge, experiences, opinions) of the extent to which SWD are affected by bullying at this school as victims, bullies, or bully-victims. This may also include the participant's account of how SWD are typically bullied (e.g., general education peers laughing at SWD or excluding them).</p>	<i>"This school year there was one of my students (SWD) who was having an issue with another student, and it was—it went over a long period of time, and this student felt like he was being bullied, and the other student felt like he was justified in making fun of this student. It was a little bit of a unique situation just because of this—my student on my caseload has problems with perception."</i>
5	GENERAL PROTOCOLS FOR RESPONDING TO BULLYING	Elemental Methods: Process Coding	<p>A process code uses gerunds (words ending with "ing") to capture some observable or implied action and process found in the data.</p> <p>This code captures the protocol the school personnel follows in this middle school when responding to bullying incidents that were reported or observed. This involves the participant's general responses to bullying. If he/she specifically discusses how he/she would</p>	<i>"We all have to follow the SWAT procedure. When somebody—ask them those questions, and then if the bully is still there, we personally would then call the bully over. Talk, and go over the expectations, on how you treat other people. Then if through conversation, if it kept going on, then I would probably send it to the office."</i>

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
			respond when SWD are involved in bullying as a victim, bully, or bully-victim, please code it as RESPONDING TO BULLYING OF SWD.	
6	RESPONDING TO BULLYING OF SWD	Elemental Methods: Process Coding	<p>A process code uses gerunds (words ending with “ing”) to capture some observable or implied action and process found in the data.</p> <p>This code captures the protocol the school personnel follow in this middle school when responding to bullying incidents involving SWD (either as a bully, victim, or bully-victim) that are reported or observed. When the participant discusses how he/she would respond to bullying incidents involving the hypothetical scenarios (Interview 2), please code it as RESPONDING TO BULLYING OF STUDENTS WITH HF-AUTISM, RESPONDING TO BULLYING OF STUDENTS WITH EBD, and RESPONDING TO BULLYING OF STUDENTS WITH LD (See these definitions below).</p>	<i>“To follow up with that, we had talked to both of them separately. We had talked to both of them together, and when I say we, I mean the social worker, administration. We finally came to a consensus that they were just not to speak to one another, and if they had, then there would be consequences to follow up with that.”</i>
7	RESPONDING TO BULLYING OF STUDENTS WITH HF-AUTISM	Elemental Methods: Process Coding	<p>A process code uses gerunds (words ending with “ing”) to capture some observable or implied action and process found in the data.</p> <p>This code captures the protocol the participant would likely follow when responding to bullying of a student with HF-Autism in the hypothetical scenario (Luis) in Interview 2.</p>	<i>“If I found out about this situation tomorrow, I would definitely first talk with Luis and see what kind of struggles he is having in class. Is it just that PE class? Is there more? Are there other peers, or if it’s mainly just the two peers in his PE class? “</i>

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
8	RESPONDING TO BULLYING OF STUDENTS WITH EBD	Elemental Methods: Process Coding	<p>A process code uses gerunds (words ending with “ing”) to capture some observable or implied action and process found in the data.</p> <p>This code captures the protocol the participant would likely follow when responding to bullying of a student with an emotional behavioral disability in the hypothetical scenario (Dwayne) in Interview 2.</p>	<i>“What I did was first I decompressed with my students, so talk to them about what’s happening on the bus, getting their opinion on the whole situation, and then we talked about how their actions were affecting other people.”</i>
9	RESPONDING TO BULLYING OF STUDENTS WITH LD	Elemental Methods: Process Coding	<p>A process code uses gerunds (words ending with “ing”) to capture some observable or implied action and process found in the data.</p> <p>This code captures the protocol the participant would likely follow when responding to bullying of a student with a Learning Disability in the hypothetical scenario (Skylar) in Interview 2.</p>	<i>“The first thing I would do is immediately talk to Skylar and make sure that she’s feeling okay and how she’s processing with those things, and potentially have her meet with the social worker, have those conversations and make sure that she is doing okay emotionally.”</i>
10	ANTI-BULLYING POLICY	Elemental Methods: Descriptive Coding	<p>A descriptive code includes a word (e.g., noun) or phrase that summarizes a segment of text or visual data.</p> <p>This code describes various procedures and protocols included in the school/district anti-bullying policy that the school personnel follow (e.g., reporting and responding bullying).</p>	<i>“We have Expect Respect here. It provides the students and staff with a way to respond to bullying if they see it or just any sort of conflict, not necessarily just bullying. The students are instructed to—if they’re in a conflict or a bullying situation, to tell the student to stop, walk away and tell a trusted adult. I mean, this is—everybody in the school could tell you what SWAT is. It’s referred to a lot, and I’ve seen students use it, so I know that they are accessing it. Also, our school has an anonymous bullying</i>

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
				<i>hotline, so if a student is being bullied, and they don't want to—the thing with students now is, "I don't wanna seem like a snitch," and so they can call anonymously and report it."</i>
11	ANTI-BULLYING POLICY IMPROVEMENTS	Affective Methods: Values Coding	<p>A value code depicts the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs.</p> <p>This code will include the participant's perspective (based on his or her personal knowledge, experiences, opinions) on the areas for improvement with respect to the school/district anti-bullying policy.</p>	<i>"I would say probably more consistency with the follow-up with what the results were with an incident. If we report something or a student reports something to us, and we transfer that information to administration, we don't always hear back on what the results was—were of that situation. Sometimes we need to know, and so we're more hunting for that information than it being provided. Especially if these students are in our classrooms, we need to have that follow-through."</i>
12	BULLYING PREVENTION AND/OR INTERVENTION (BPI)	Elemental Methods: Descriptive Coding	<p>A descriptive code includes a word (e.g., noun) or phrase that summarizes a segment of text or visual data.</p> <p>This code refers to specific Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 programs, strategies, and practices that the school personnel employ in this middle school in order to prevent or intervene with bullying (e.g., <i>Expect Respect</i>, <i>Check In-Check Out</i>, <i>Restorative Justice Practices</i>, and <i>Social Thinking</i>). Programs, strategies, and practices that fall under this code may focus on youth without disabilities and/or SWD. However,</p>	<i>"Beginning in last school year, we started to try to integrate restorative circles. I went to some restorative circle training, and currently they have—I know they have done groups. I've never been a part of a restorative circle group, but I know they have done them. I've known they've done—social workers have been involved. The administration's been involved. I'm not sure if they've involved families directly."</i>

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
			when the participant (specifically in Interview 2) discusses intervention programs, strategies, or practices that would likely be considered with students with HF-Autism, Emotional Behavioral Disability, and Learning Disability, they should be coded as BPI FOR STUDENTS WITH HF-AUTISM, BPI FOR STUDENTS WITH EBD, BPI FOR STUDENTS WITH LD, respectively (these codes are defined below).	
13	-LEAST/LESS EFFECTIVE BPI	Affective Methods: Evaluation Coding	<p>Evaluation coding assigns judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy.</p> <p>This code indicates the participant's judgments which elements of bullying prevention and intervention (e.g., programs, strategies, and practices) at this middle school are least or less effective than others.</p>	<i>"Sometimes I feel like they're not aren't even effective. You see kids go through the Striving Stallions then get on the next tier. Sometimes I don't see a lotta change in people. If I do, it's kind of rare."</i>
14	+MOST/MORE EFFECTIVE BPI	Affective Methods: Evaluation Coding	<p>Evaluation coding assigns judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy.</p> <p>This code indicates the participant's judgments which elements of bullying prevention and intervention (e.g., programs, strategies, and practices) at this middle school are most or more effective than others.</p>	<i>"I think most effective is probably the SWAT, just because I feel like more kids are now telling us when things happen. Whereas before in the past, they kept a lot of it in."</i>
15	+/-BPI MIXED EFFECTIVENESS	Affective Methods: Evaluation Coding	Evaluation coding assigns judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy.	<i>"I don't think PBIS works too well on stopping it, for the people that are the really bad bullies. I don't think they respond to PBIS."</i>

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
			This code indicates the participant's judgments which elements of bullying prevention and intervention (e.g., programs, strategies, and practices) at this middle school that have mixed effectiveness.	
16	BPI FOR STUDENTS WITH HF-AUTISM	Elemental Methods: Descriptive Coding	<p>A descriptive code includes a word (e.g., noun) or phrase that summarizes a segment of text or visual data.</p> <p>This code refers to specific Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 programs, strategies, and practices (e.g., <i>Expect Respect</i>, <i>Check-In Check-Out</i>, <i>Restorative Justice Practices</i>, and <i>Social Thinking</i>) that the participant would likely consider utilizing in order to prevent or intervene with bullying of a student with HF-Autism in the hypothetical scenario included in Interview 2.</p> <p>This may include strategies, practices, and interventions for both the victim and bullies.</p>	<i>"I would definitely want to see him on maybe like a check-in, check-out system, not necessarily for behavior, but just to see how he's regulating in those classes and then also making sure she has social work and things like that to decompress these situations that may be happening. Then I think a restorative circle would definitely be the best situation for this if all parties are willing to have that."</i>
17	BPI FOR STUDENTS WITH EBD	Elemental Methods: Descriptive Coding	<p>A descriptive code includes a word (e.g., noun) or phrase that summarizes a segment of text or visual data.</p> <p>This code refers to specific Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 programs, strategies, and practices (e.g., <i>Expect Respect</i>, <i>Check In Check Out</i>, <i>Restorative Justice Practices</i>, and <i>Social Thinking</i>) that the participant would consider utilizing in order to prevent or intervene with bullying of a student with Emotional Behavioral Disability in the hypothetical scenario included</p>	<p><i>"Then, I'd have, if the student was up and willing and ready for it, having again that peer restorative circle, so we can just build and progress from there."</i></p> <p><i>"Well, I think the review of the matrix—I think that those are always really important, having those posted on each and every bus, and then talking about the levels of potential consequences after that. Just going</i></p>

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
			in Interview 2. This may include strategies, practices, and interventions for both the victim and bullies.	<i>over the expectations again and re-teaching.”</i>
18	BPI FOR STUDENTS WITH LD	Elemental Methods: Descriptive Coding	<p>A descriptive code includes a word (e.g., noun) or phrase that summarizes a segment of text or visual data.</p> <p>This code refers to specific Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 programs, strategies, and practices (e.g., <i>Expect Respect</i>, <i>Check-In Check-Out</i>, <i>Restorative Justice Practices</i>, and <i>Social Thinking</i>) that the participant would consider utilizing in order to prevent or intervene with bullying of a student with Learning Disability in the hypothetical scenario included in Interview 2. This may include strategies, practices, and interventions for both the victim and bullies.</p>	<p><i>“If needed, I would do a restorative circle.”</i></p> <p><i>“For this one, I think of a couple of things that could be possible. I know that we do have some fair amount of relational aggression that goes on amongst girls in our building. Probably not very atypical of a middle school. I would wonder if while there might not be a SAIG group for it could there be a small girls group that could be created for her or for probably other girls that are dealing with similar things. Girls who have difficulty making friends and keeping friends.”</i></p>
19	BPI: GENERAL AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	Affective Methods: Values Coding	<p>A value code depicts the participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs.</p> <p>This code includes the participant’s perspective (based on his/her personal knowledge, experiences, opinions) on what could be done to ensure effective bullying prevention and intervention <u>for all students</u>. Areas for improvement in the area of bullying prevention and intervention specifically for SWD need to be coded as BPI AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT FOR SWD (please see the</p>	<p>Social Worker talking about implementing SEL curriculum (<i>Second Step</i>) school-wide: <i>“Right. That would be our hope. I think our dream would be that it would be done in every classroom across grade levels, so that you know all students are being exposed to it just like they are being exposed to the ELA curriculum or the math curriculum, et cetera.”</i></p>

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
			code below).	
20	BPI: AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT FOR SWD	Affective Methods: Values Coding	<p>A value code depicts the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs.</p> <p>This code will include the participant's perspective (based on their personal knowledge, experiences, opinions) on what could be done to ensure effective bullying prevention and intervention, <u>specifically for SWD</u>.</p>	<i>"I would also say maybe for students specifically with disabilities is being able to train them on what bullying is because, like I said, sometimes they might not even realize what they're doing or what's happening might be bullying and being able to get them to vocalize that because I'm sure there are instances where they might be bullying or getting bullied, and they don't even realize it."</i>
21	BPI & PBIS ALIGNMENT	Affective Methods: Values Coding	<p>A value code depicts the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs.</p> <p>This code includes the participant's perspective (based on their personal knowledge, experiences, opinions) on the extent to which bullying prevention and intervention efforts are integrated and aligned with PBIS at this school.</p>	<i>"I don't think it's integrated enough talk more about the behaviors. Like how to walk in the hallway, how to behave in a bathroom. How to behave in a locker room. I don't think so much that it really focuses on bullying enough, with the kids."</i>
22	BULLYING EXPERTISE	Affective Methods: Values Coding	<p>A value code depicts the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs.</p> <p>This code includes the participant's perspective on his or her own expertise with bullying prevention and intervention.</p>	<i>"I feel like I have the—a good basis for it. I feel like I would know what to do in that situation. I wouldn't say I'm necessarily an expert by any means, but I think I would know how to handle a situation where that comes across."</i>
23	BULLYING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD)	Elemental Methods: Descriptive Coding	A descriptive code includes a word (e.g., noun) or phrase that summarizes a segment of text or visual data.	<i>"Like I said, last year, before we started doing—or before we even had heard of restorative circles, they sent me to the training for that. I think I</i>

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
			This code describes professional development (workshops, conferences, presentations) that the participant attended to learn about bullying.	<i>was one of the first people to get trained on that, but then, following that training, they did a shorter, more condensed training for the entire staff on restorative circles. Expect Respect will come to staff meetings and remind us of the process of how to effectively use those techniques. We also have online trainings in the beginning of every year that always include bullying prevention and intervention."</i>
24	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS	Affective Methods: Values Coding	<p>A value code depicts the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs.</p> <p>This code includes the participant's perspective on what additional supports, tools, or training he/she may need to further prevent and intervene with bullying particularly of SWD at this middle school.</p>	<i>"I mean, I guess I would have to know what's available. I'd always be open to more training. I would be interested I more restorative-circle training because that was so long ago, and I feel like that's something that could be honed in on more."</i>
25	"I DON'T WANNA WORK WITH THAT PERSON"	Elemental Methods: In Vivo Coding	An In Vivo code includes a word or short phrase stated by the participant, which is placed in quotation marks.	<i>"I see the social difference where other kids do not wanna interact with them. It was noticeable over the course of the year, because in the beginning, they didn't—but when they started seeing the person talk that way or act that way, you saw them. <b>"I don't wanna work with that person."</b> They're not invited into groups. They're not invited in as partners."</i>
26	SWD AFFECTED BY BULLYING	Simultaneous coding	This is the application of two or more different codes to a single qualitative datum, or the	<i>"I see the social difference where other kids do not wanna interact with</i>

	Name of the Code	Code Method/Type	Definition	Example
	"I DON'T WANNA WORK WITH THAT PERSON"		overlapped occurrence of two or more codes applied to sequential unities of data.	<i>them. It was noticeable over the course of the year, because in the beginning, they didn't—but when they started seeing the person talk that way or act that way, you saw them. "I don't wanna work with that person." They're not invited into groups. They're not invited in as partners."</i>

## APPENDIX W. Theoretical Propositions for the Study and Results

### Theoretical Propositions for the Case Study and Results

Study Questions	Theoretical Propositions	Results
<b>Research Question 1</b>	<p>A middle school with successfully adopted PBIS will have positive school climate, which sets expectations for desired behavior and a lack of tolerance for bullying of anyone.</p> <p>Prosocial behaviors will be universally and explicitly taught and reinforced which consequently prevents and/or reduces bullying of SWD.</p> <p>PBIS creates is social culture of proactive and systematic approach to addressing problem behaviors, which increases the likelihood that SWD receive more targeted anti-bullying interventions.</p>	<p>The PBIS framework allows school professionals to establish and promote a positive school climate at Homestead School. Results from the teacher and survey satisfaction survey indicated that Homestead School had positive school climate during the 2016-17 school year. The main premise shared by the school personnel was that teaching students school-wide prosocial expected behaviors decreases the likelihood of their involvement in bullying.</p> <p>Prosocial behaviors were taught through Cool Tools during PBIS Kick-Off Days and in advisory. They were reinforced with gotcha tickets.</p> <p>Homestead School had a proactive system-wide approach to identifying tiered interventions. A Tier 1 Team was reviewing school-wide ODR data to determine if any positive/expected behaviors needed to be retaught. A Tier 2 Team was charged with reviewing referrals for Tier 2 interventions (i.e., CICO, SAIG, and brief BIP-FBA), and placing students in Tier 2 interventions and evaluating their progress. When SWD were demonstrating problem behaviors, they were likely to be invited to participate in CICO and/or SAIG (emotional management skills group). Staff did not wait for SWD to demonstrate significant bullying behaviors to initiate Tier 2 interventions.</p> <p>Notably, school personnel perceived bullying of SWD was not a large-scale problem. No quantitative data were obtained to confirm the bullying rates among SWD. The data on bullying perpetration derived from ODR reports were likely an underestimation of bullying prevalence.</p>

Study Questions	Theoretical Propositions	Results
	<p>PBIS creates a collaborative environment in which school personnel will work smarter - not harder. Bullying prevention and intervention efforts will be aligned and integrated within PBIS.</p>	<p>It appeared that Homestead did not have systematic data collection focusing on victimization of SWD.</p> <p>There was is a team approach to reviewing data and identifying needs for Tier 1 or Tier 2 interventions. The <i>Expect Respect</i> club sponsor attended Tier 1 meetings. There was a communication between the <i>Expect Respect</i> sponsor and PBIS coaches.</p> <p>Through adopting <i>Expect Respect</i>, bullying prevention and intervention efforts had been integrated within the school's PBIS framework. School personnel, specifically, special education teachers, related services providers, and school administrators, perceived bullying prevention and intervention to be aligned with PBIS. The main emphasis was on teaching students to respond to disrespectful behavior and teaching them respectful behavior. Among general education teachers, some acknowledged that bullying prevention and intervention efforts were integrated and aligned with PBIS, while others noted that they appeared to be separate initiatives and more could be done to align them.</p>
<p><b>Research Question 2</b></p>	<p>School personnel in a middle school with a successfully adopted multi-tiered framework, such as PBIS will share a universal definition of bullying.</p> <p>School personnel will respond to bullying of SWD in a consistent manner in accordance with the school anti-bullying policy and best practices.</p>	<p>School personnel were able to identify some key features of bullying that differentiate it from other inappropriate behaviors; however, they did not appear to share a definition of bullying. Related services providers and school administrators were more likely than general education teachers and special education teachers to include the imbalance in strength and power that can lead to asymmetric relationships between the bully and victim.</p> <p>School personnel reported responding to the bullying of SWD and their peers without disabilities in the same or a similar manner.</p> <p>All school personnel agreed that their response to observed or reported bullying involves talking with the victim and the alleged bully usually separately to gather information, establish facts, and gain their perspective on the situation. They gather information from the students,</p>

Study Questions	Theoretical Propositions	Results
		<p>establish facts, and report bullying to school administrators. In addition, general education teachers reported communicating with the student's case manager/special education teacher and involving related services personnel as necessary.</p> <p>Few participants described the SWAT routine as part of the protocol they followed when responding to bullying, even though it is one of the key components of <i>Expect Respect</i>.</p> <p>The use of ODRs to document bullying after it was reported did not appear to be a consistent or common practice across the different units of analysis.</p> <p>Of the four types of school personnel, school administrators were most likely to describe communicating with parents in response to reports of bullying.</p> <p>Both general education teachers and special education teachers noted that staff takes the disability into account when an SWD bullied another student. Depending on their disabilities, students may need more explanation from an adult, more frequent or explicit teaching the expected behaviors, adults might need to be more patient, and consequences might be modified.</p>
<b>Research Question 3</b>	School personnel will utilize similar components of bullying prevention and intervention to increase the protective factors of SWD involved in bullying.	<p>A reoccurring theme shared across all the four types of school personnel was that <i>Expect Respect</i> and its club members played a key role in developing bullying prevention activities that were implemented a few times a year in advisory. These bullying prevention activities focused on reinforcing school-wide behaviors, specifically being respectful, understanding how to respond to disrespectful behavior, and the role of bystanders in preventing or intervening with disrespectful or bullying behavior.</p> <p>A consistent theme emerged among general educators who noted that</p>

Study Questions	Theoretical Propositions	Results
		<p>SWD were likely to have difficulty participating actively in the <i>Expect Respect</i> bullying prevention activities facilitated in advisory.</p> <p>Overall, there appeared to be a shared belief among the school personnel that empowering bystanders is the key component of <i>Expect Respect</i> and thus bullying prevention and intervention efforts at Homestead.</p> <p>The SWAT routine was designed to teach potential victims and bystanders how to respond to disrespectful behavior, yet adolescents perceived it as juvenile and were less likely to use it.</p> <p>Numerous school personnel also acknowledged that PBIS offered Cool Tools, gotcha tickets, and visuals that were used to teach and reinforce school-wide prosocial behaviors.</p> <p>Some school personnel had received professional development on restorative practices. School administrators reported implementing restorative practices when responding to disciplinary problems, including bullying.</p> <p>General educators recognized that more intensive interventions were needed for students who were likely to bully repeatedly and were not responding to PBIS Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions.</p> <p>Special education teachers revealed that staff needed to be more consistent with implementing PBIS, and school-wide expected behaviors needed to be re-taught more consistently and rewarded with gotcha tickets.</p> <p>Related services personnel reported that more frequent and intensive interventions implemented at the classroom level, such as <i>Second Step</i> or restorative circles, are needed to prevent and intervene with bullying.</p> <p>Among school administrators there was a shared understanding that in</p>

Study Questions	Theoretical Propositions	Results
	<p>The elements of bullying prevention and intervention utilized with SWD will be aligned with the current research literature on bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.</p> <p>Some school personnel will recognize that they need more resources to intensify prevention and intervention of SWD.</p>	<p>order to prevent bullying of SWD included in general education classrooms, peers without disabilities needed more disability awareness to develop empathy for their experiences. Although the remaining groups of school professionals did not universally discuss the need for disability awareness to prevent bullying of SWD, there were at least one to two individual participants within each group who voiced a similar concern. School administrators expressed that teachers also needed more disability awareness to understand how different disabilities (i.e., emotional behavioral disability) could affect the student's involvement in bullying.</p> <p>The school personnel likely utilized CICO and brief FBA/BIP when preventing or intervention with bullying of SWD, which are evidence-based practices. They also provided SAIG groups that have lessons plans developed by another PBIS district. A review of the curriculum online indicated that it utilized some resources from the Skills Streaming curriculum. However, the overall curriculum was not research based.</p> <p>School administrators reported that more disability awareness is needed to help peers without disabilities be more empathetic towards SWD (more of school-wide/primary intervention). Since school personnel did not perceive bullying of SWD to be a big problem, they did not seem to recognize that more individualized bullying interventions were needed for SWD. This is likely because their data collection on bullying provides limited information about SWD.</p> <p>General education teachers recognized the need for more intensive interventions for students who don't respond to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions.</p>
<b>Research Question 4</b>	The school personnel will utilize some systematic Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions to support SWD involved in bullying. These interventions will be evidence-based and will	It appeared that when SWD demonstrated problem behaviors or specifically involved in bullying, they were likely be invited to participate in CICO and/or SAIG (emotional management skills group) or had their BIPs reviewed. CICO and brief FBA/BIP are evidence-based practices.



Study Questions	Theoretical Propositions	Results
	<p>School personnel will collaborate effectively to intensify bullying prevention and intervention for SWD.</p>	<p>unclear to what extent team members discussed individual students who received ODRs for bullying to determine whether these incidents involved SWD. It appeared that Homestead did not have systematic data collection focusing on victimization of SWD.</p> <p>Homestead had a collaborative system-wide approach to data-based decision making. A Tier 1 Team was reviewing school-wide ODR data and to determine if any positive expected behaviors needed to be retaught. A Tier 2 Team was reviewing referrals for Tier 2 interventions (i.e., CICO, SAIG, and brief BIP-FBA), placing students in Tier 2 interventions, and evaluating their progress. It is unclear to what extent team members discussed individual students who received ODRs for bullying to determine whether these incidents involved SWD. There was also a Tier 3 Team and few students were referred for more individualized interventions (not due to bullying).</p>

*Note.* PBIS = positive behavioral interventions and supports; SWD = students with disabilities

## APPENDIX X. Data Analysis Log

Microsoft Excel window: Data Analysis Log 201701016.xlsx

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	A	B	C	D	E	F
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## VITA

## Agata Trzaska

**Education**

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**University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Chicago, IL****PhD - Special Education - August 2018**

- **Dissertation Title:** *A Case Study of Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities in Middle School*
- Advisor: Dr. Elizabeth Talbott

**National-Louis University (NLU), Evanston, IL****Educational Specialist Degree in School Psychology - June 2007****Master of Arts - Educational Psychology - August 2005****Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, IL****Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Communication; Urban Studies Minor - June 2003****Certifications**

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Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP)

School Service Personnel Certificate - Type 73

Bilingual Endorsement in Polish Language

**Research Experience**

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**University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) – Department of Special Education** April 2017-June 2018**Dissertation Research: A Case Study of Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Disabilities in Middle School**

- Conducted a qualitative study to examine how different school personnel, including general education teachers, special education teachers, related services providers, and school administrators, prevent and intervene with bullying of youth with high-incidence disabilities in a middle school that adopted the Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) framework.

**University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) – Department of Special Education** May 2014-April 2016

Invited to collaborate with my Advisor, Elizabeth Talbott, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education, on conducting a systematic review of peer tutoring interventions for students with disabilities

- Conducted searches for relevant literature and coded studies based on the inclusion criteria
- Actively participated in research meetings focusing on developing and refining research questions, search criteria, data collection and analysis
- Critiqued and synthesized key findings from studies published in peer reviewed journals
- Assisted with co-writing a chapter focusing on peer tutoring interventions published in *The Handbook of Research on Diversity in Special Education* in 2018

**University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) –Department of Special Education** August 2012-June 2014**Research Assistant for Federico R. Waitoller, Ph.D., Assistant Professor**

- Collaborated on a research project focusing on examining longitudinal patterns in enrollment of students with disabilities in Chicago neighborhood schools and charter schools
- Actively participated in research meetings focusing on developing and refining research questions, search criteria, data collection and analysis

- Searched databases using specific inclusion criteria (Academic Search Premier, EBSCO, PsychINFO, Google Scholar)
- Retrieved, organized, and electronically filed articles in RefWorks and EndNote X7
- Critiqued and synthesized key findings from studies published in peer-reviewed journals and reports
- Retrieved enrollment, achievement, discipline, and racial data on students attending Chicago Public Schools from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Office for Civil Rights (OCR), Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and Chicago Public Schools (CPS)
- Ran multiple queries in Microsoft ACCESS that resulted in refining a database of Chicago charter schools
- Assisted in the development of poster presentation for TASH Conference
- Wrote sections of the literature review focusing on students with disabilities in charter schools
- Assisted with writing and revising research report published in May 2014 by *Collaborative for Equity & Justice in Education (CEJE)* and a manuscript that will be published in *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*

### **Teaching Experience – Higher Education**

**Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, IL**

August 2017 - Present

***Adjunct Instructor***

- Undergraduate course: Special Education (SPE) 223 of PK-12 Learners with Exceptionalities
- Graduate course (hybrid): Master of Education in Teacher Leadership (MTL) 532: Teaching and Learning in the Diverse Classroom

**University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC)**

January-May 2015 and August-December 2015

**Graduate Assistant** (*August 2015-December 2015*)

- Graduate course: Special Education (SPED 472) Promoting Academic and Prosocial Behavior I

**Teaching Internship** (*January 2015-May 2015*)

- Graduate course: Special Education (SPED 472) Promoting Academic and Prosocial Behavior I

### **Related Professional Experience**

**The LaGrange Area Department of Special Education, Lyons Township High School, LaGrange IL**  
(*Grades 9-12, 4,046 students*), LaGrange IL

***School Psychologist (Full Time)***

August 2015-Present

***Additional Roles: The Local Educational Agency (LEA) representative for the Cross-Categorical Program***

- Conduct educational and psychological evaluations utilizing a wide range of assessment approaches and tools
- Serve as a Case Manager for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Lead special education teams in developing and implementing data-driven Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)
- Train Teachers and Para Educators on Behavior Intervention Plans and Curriculum-Based Measurements
- Assist with AIMSweb data collection quarterly to monitor progress of students with IEPs
- Collaborate with members of Tier 2 and Tier 3 Teams to recommend effective interventions for students
- Collaborate with members of the Special Education Leadership Team to develop consistent procedures for developing IEPs and facilitating meetings

- Active involvement in weekly/bi-weekly team meetings, including Life-Skills Team, Transition Team, Inclusion Team, and Grade-Level Problem Solving Team
- Collaborate with members of the school-wide Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Committee to develop a vision and mission statement, analyze results from the school-wide climate assessment, and establish a 5-year plan
- Trained the staff on the key components of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence RULER program
- Mentor newly hired school psychologists
- Provide professional supervision to school psychologist interns

**Mount Prospect School District 57, Fairview Elementary School, Mount Prospect, IL**

*(Grades 2-5, 450 students)*

**School Psychologist (Full Time)**

August 2007-June 2015

***Additional Roles: Team Leader and the LEA for the Fairview School Special Services/The RtI Building Coordinator and Data Analysis Facilitator and Presenter for 450 students and 50 staff members***

- Conducted educational and psychological evaluations utilizing a wide range of assessment approaches and tools
- Facilitated the inclusion of special education students with Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders, Autism Disorders, and Mood Disorders by providing special education teachers and general education staff with ongoing consultation and collaboration in the area of differentiation and positive behavior supports
- Implemented Tier 2 and Tier 3 evidence-based interventions and therapeutic services based on students' needs (Social Thinking, Zones of Regulation, Skillstreaming, Strong Kids, Coping Cat)
- Actively involved in school-wide planning and implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP)
- Actively participated in the District RtI Leadership Committee, School Improvement Committee, School Crisis Committee, and School Social-Emotional Committee
- Provided crisis intervention services, conducted risk assessments and made appropriate referrals when necessary
- Served as a case manager for students with Tier 3 individual problem solving and Section 504 Plans
- Consulted and collaborated with culturally and linguistically diverse families in the area of EL services and the provision of special education
- Mentored newly hired school psychologists
- Provided professional supervision to school psychologist interns and practicum students

## **Publications**

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- Trzaska, A. (in press). Definition and purpose of functional behavioral assessment. In T. Heller, S. Parker Harris, C. Gill, & R. Gould (Eds). *Disability in American life: An encyclopedia of concepts, policies, and controversies*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Talbott, E., Trzaska, A., & Zurheide, J. L. (2017). A systematic review of peer tutoring interventions for students with disabilities. In M. T. Hughes, & E. Talbott (Eds). *The handbook of diversity in special education* (pp. 321-356). Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley Press.
- Waitoller, F. R., Maggin, D. M., & Trzaska, A. (2017). A longitudinal comparison of enrollment patterns of SRSE in urban neighborhood and charter schools. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 28(1), 3-12.
- Waitoller, F. R., Radinsky, J., Trzaska, A., & Maggin, D. M. (2014). *A longitudinal comparison of enrollment patterns of students receiving special education services in Chicago charter and*

*neighborhood public schools*. Research Report. Collaborative for Equity & Justice in Education (CEJE).

- Trzaska, A., & Schultz, B. (2009). What does it mean to teach toward freedom? *Educational Studies*, 45(4) 392-398.

## **Presentations**

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- Trzaska, A. (2018, February). *Students with disabilities and bullying prevention and intervention*. Poster session presented at the National Associations for School Psychologists (NASP), Chicago, IL.
- Trzaska, A. (2018, February). *A case study of bullying prevention and intervention for students with disabilities in middle school*. Poster session presented at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Convention & Expo, Tampa, FL.
- Trzaska, A. (2016, April). *Perspectives of students with disabilities and special education teachers on bullying*. Poster session presented at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Convention & Expo, St. Louis, MO.
- Talbott, E., Trzaska, A., & Zurheide, J. L. (2014, October). *A systematic review of peer tutoring interventions for students with disabilities around the world*. Poster session presented at the UIC College of Education Annual Research Day, Chicago, IL.
- Trzaska, A., Collado, C., & McGrath, A. (2014, September). *Special education doctoral program tips for new doctoral students*. Presented as a guest lecturer at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Proseminar in Special Education course, Chicago, IL.
- Waitoller, F. R. & Trzaska, A. (2013, December). *Students with severe disabilities in charter schools*. Poster session presented at the TASH Conference, Chicago, IL.
- Trzaska, A. (2013, September). *Bullying as an international phenomenon*. Poster session presented at the Council for Children with Behavior Disorders (CCBD), Chicago, IL.
- Trzaska, A. (2012, June). *What's not bullying? Newly certified special education teachers' knowledge regarding bullying*. Poster session presented at the DePaul University Education Doctorate Student Association (EDSA) Seminar on Research, Funding & Publication, Chicago, IL.

## **Service/Awards/Funding**

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- Reviewer, National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), 2019 Annual Convention
- Travel Award to present dissertation research, UIC Department of Special Education, 2018
- Dissertation/Thesis/Major Research Paper Funding Grant, UIC Department of Research in Education, 2017
- Albin & Young Award in recognition as a UIC Special Education doctoral student who shows promise of making significant contributions in the field, 2017
- Reviewer, American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2015 Annual Meeting 2015

## **Professional Affiliations**

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- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
- National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)
- American Education Research Association (AERA)

## **Additional Skills and Information**

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Language: Fluent in Polish

Volunteer/Mentor: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago - Provided one-on-one mentoring to children from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (June 2009-June 2011)