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**USING LITERATURE TO EDUCATE STUDENTS ABOUT BULLYING**

by

Rebecca S. Goldberg

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Teacher Education  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Science in Teaching  
at  
Rowan University  
June 22, 2011

Thesis Chair: Susan Browne, Ed. D

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## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge and thank all the members of my family for their love and support. Without your continual encouragement and guidance over the past five years at Rowan University, I would not have achieved all that I have. You believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself.

I also would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Susan Browne, for all of her patience and encouragement. No matter how long the road ahead was, you always helped me see the light at the end.

## **Abstract**

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USING LITERATURE TO EDUCATE STUDENTS ABOUT BULLYING

2010/11  
Susan Browne, Ed. D.  
Masters of Science in Teaching in Collaborative Teaching

The purpose of this study was to investigate how using literature to educate students about bullying would support their understandings about bullying and how to address it. This study was conducted at Osage Elementary School in Voorhees, New Jersey. Twenty-one third graders voluntarily participated in this study. An initial and final survey, four discussions and four surveys following the discussions along with a teacher research journal were used in this study to gather data. A qualitative approach was utilized to analyze and draw conclusions from the research. The data showed student understanding about bullying changed over the course of the study. The data yielded five distinct findings. Anonymity allows students to achieve a level of comfort to share information with their teacher. Students were able to see themselves as having a role in issues around bullying. Critical texts help to engage students in discussions about critical issues. Students related to the characters and events in the stories. The stories center around the bullying of the main characters. A learning community was established that allowed the students to better determine the severity of a disciplinary problem. One implication that emerged from this study is a need for further research to determine the long term effects literature has on the perspectives of the students about bullying.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

A very large boy was sitting next to the smallest girl in the class. A faint sweet voice proclaimed, "Pick it UP!" The boy shifted in his seat, but remained silent. The small girl had dropped the boy's paper on the ground and was yelling at him to pick it up. The boy's voice stuttered out the words, "Ba-ba-ba-but, ya-ya-ya-ya." The girl began to hysterically laugh, the rest of the table joined in. The very large boy made himself as small as possible. He pulled his arms inside his shirt and tried to pull his head into the shirt like a frightened turtle retreating into its shell.

#### Purpose Statement

The boy in the vignette is not alone. Statistics show that fifteen to thirty percent of Americans are a bully or victim each year (Feinberg, 2003). When asked, most adults will admit experiencing bullying in some form. Many adults who were bullied as a child can recall in detail the events that occurred. The psychological damage that results from bullying can last a life-time (Starr, 2009).

Though bullying has become more prevalent in the media as of late, it has always existed in classrooms. Bullying commonly occurs whenever people, or in the case of this study, children congregate into a group (Herman, 2006). Everyone, no matter how old or young, knows about bullying, and personally experienced it in some manner (Nordahl, Poole, Stanton, Walden & Beran, 2008). Bullying is one of the few social issues every culture and country is faced with (Stop Bullying, 1998). Bullying has no borders (Stop Bullying, 1998).

This study is an attempt to address some of the issues students in a third grade class face with bullying. This researcher is student teaching in the third grade classroom where the study will be conducted. It is the intent of this researcher to educate third graders about bullies and methods of stopping a bully using literature. The research's intent is to study what happens when a series of read alouds are conducted in a classroom setting that address bullying situations. Throughout this study, students engage in read alouds and discussions that will generate knowledge about bullying. A variety of surveys and discussions, as well as the teacher research journal will provide this researcher with abundant data to formulate a clear conclusion.

#### Statement of Research Problem and Question

As more and more school shootings and teen suicides occur in the United States, the media is highlighting bullying as the cause (Cochran, 2010). The figure has rapidly turned to the educators to stop the new trend in its tracks, so to speak (Bully Proof Your Classroom, 1999). Teachers and administrators are working hard to determine new and better ways to protect the young students from and teach about bullying (Bully Proof Your Classroom, 1999). Experts have joined the mission along with parents and politicians.

This has led me to think about ways to educate third grade students about bullying. My research question became, *What Happens when I use literature to teach a unit on bullying in a 3rd grade class?* Two additional questions emerge as sub-questions that will be examined throughout the study, *How do read alouds help students relate to bullying situations?* and *Will students prefer to learn about sensitive issues, such as*

*bullying, through read alouds and discussions?* Unlike many of the studies in the literature focusing on middle and high school (Nordahl, Poole, Stanton, Walden & Beran, 2008), this study will add to discussions on addressing bullying in elementary school contexts. This study also speaks to the potential of examining bullying through content area instruction.

### Story of the Question

December 11, 2009, I arrive to work as if it was a normal day. My boss asked me if I was from Bridgewater, and I told him I was not, but a town nearby. He then informed me that a student was arrested because police found weapons in his home, and architectural plans of the high school. Panic ran through me. I immediately blurted out, “My cousin goes to that school!!!” I thought about him and all the students I worked with and will work with and thought about what could drive someone to want to bring weapons into a school. A school, the place parents send their children to be safe. I began to feel light headed. I continued with the rest of the evening, having a difficult time focusing on any one thing in particular.

A few weeks later, I read about a student, who killed himself, because he could not face being bullied any longer. I knew this was a reality I was going to have to face. My future students were in danger of bullies, and becoming bullies. I knew then, that no topic could be more important for me to research than bullying. I needed to fully understand what my future students were going to be facing, and how to best prepare them to avoid becoming a bully, or his victim.

Often schools do utilize effective methods when addressing critical issues (Nordahl, Poole, Stanton, Walden & Beran, 2008). *What would attract students' attention and educate them about bullying?* I thought about when I was in school, what part of the day did I look forward to most. I recalled sitting on the rug or in our desks listening to the teacher read to us. Read alouds. I walked into my placement the next day, and sure enough, when the teacher called the students to the rug for the daily read aloud, every face in the class light up! It made me start thinking, *What would happen if I used literature to teach my students about bullying? Since they love being read to, would the sensitive subject matter reach them at a deeper level? Would read alouds assist students in recognizing bullying situations?*

#### Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is broken into five chapters. Chapter two will present literature and other studies that have been previously published discussing bullying. Chapter three is divided into two sections. The first section will address the context of the study. The second part will explain the research methodology and design. The fourth chapter is critical to the study. It is where the findings are recorded and analyzes the results. The fifth and final chapter summarizes the results of the research and draws conclusions.

## Chapter Two

### A Literature Review

*“I had my bully, and it was excruciating. Not only the bully, but the intimidation I felt.”*

- The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

Bullying is a major problem that has become present in the media, schools, and workplaces. This chapter presents a review of literature related to current issues around bullying. The chapter is broken in several sections. The first section deals with defining bullying. Several works have been examined closely to determine the most accurate definition. The second section deals with the different people affected by bullying. It is important to study who is affected in order to best determine the most effective prevention and intervention methods. The third and fourth sections discuss the characteristics of the typical bully and victim. These sections provide a better understanding into what leads certain students to becoming bullies, and why other students become their victims. The fifth section takes into account the peers and family members of the victim and bully, and how they are affected by the situation. Interventions that are already in place in American Schools is discussed in the sixth section. Literature that can be used in classrooms to discuss bullying is briefly talked about in the seventh section. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the use of literature to educate a class about the affects of bullying.

## Evolving Definition of Bullying

Bullying, “is a long standing problem that detrimentally affects as substantial number of students” (Nordahl, Poole, Stanton, Walden & Beran, 2008, p. 1). It is a challenge to create one definition to fit all the different forms of bullying. There is the traditional school yard bully who trips students in the halls, and makes the girls cry (Beane, 1999). Then there is the new and more popular cyber bullying (Hinduja & Pratchin, 2004-2010). Olweus (1993) has met the challenge of defining bullying with one definition used by most experts; “*Bullying; negative and repetitive actions, either physical or verbal, that have hostile intent by the bully.*” (Olweus, 1993)

## Prevalence of Bullying

According to Stop Bullying, (1998), a website created by the New Zealand Police and Telecom as part of the national campaign against bullying called *Kia Kaha*, “Scientific studies show that bullying is an international problem that affects all schools” (Stop Bullying, 1998) Each and every school day, on average 160,000 American students stay home from school because they are too afraid of their bully, and what he or she might do (National Association of School Psychologists). Any time you have children congregated in one location, bullying is likely to occur (Herman, 2006). However, bullying most often occurs in classrooms, on playgrounds, and in the hallways of schools (Olweus, 1993).

Bullying is a long-standing problem that detrimentally affects a substantial number of students (Baldry & Farrington, 2004). Bullying, often times, results in long lasting psychological or physical pain for the victim (Smith & Pellegrini, 2000). Research

has shown that bullies and repeated victims are far more likely to commit criminal activities (Stop Bullying). About sixty percent of boys who were identified as bullies in middle school had committed a minimum of one crime by the time they turned twenty four (Olweus, 1993).

Not only are the victims and the bullies affected, but also the bystanders. Witnesses are often left feeling helpless and vulnerable (Beran, 2005). More times than not, the victims and the witnesses feel that it is tattling to inform an adult of an incident of bullying (Beane, 1999). Educators need to make students understand that they need to turn to adults for help; the bullying will not stop if left ignored (Olweus, 1993). Susan Lipkins, during an interview with Today Show's Ann Curry, suggested that schools train teachers how to deal with bullying situations. She also went on to suggest that a system be set up for students, parents *and* teachers to know how to and to whom to report a problem. (Lipkins, 2010)

### Characteristics of the Bully

There are specific characteristics that the average bully tends to exhibit. On average, about twenty percent of American students are bullies (National Association of School Psychology). It is more common to encounter a male bully than a female; however both boys and girls can be bullies (Beane, 1999). Bullies often feel lonely; they feel they have a lack of close friends (Mash & Wolfe, 2007). All bullies have been bullied at some point in time; often times, by family members or peers (Rimm, 2000). Most bullies come from broken families; at home the bullies are often abused or mistreated (Rimm, 2000). Mistakenly, many people feel bullies have low self-esteem, in



truth, bullying is about gaining power over others (Beane, 1999). They bully to gain control, and will increase the intensity of the bullying unless adult intervention occurs (Olweus, 1993).

### Characteristics of the Victim

Whenever there is a bully, there is a victim. Sadly though, there are far more victims than there are bullies among American students. Research has shown that on average, twenty-five percent of American students are victims of bullying (National Association of School Psychology, 2003). Though the victims are a wide range of different personalities and people, there are some similar traits that victims of bullying share. The victims usually appear to be *different* from other students (Beane, 1999). Olweus says that victims are most often “chosen because they are sensitive, anxious, and unable to retaliate” (Starr, 2009, p. 2). Victims also tend to be smaller and younger than their bullies, and many times lack the social skills to develop strong friendships that would support them (Olweus, 1993). Often times victims develop low self-esteem, feeling lonely and depressed; generally they avoid school whenever possible (Beran, 2005). The longevity and severity of the affects of bullying all depends on the person affected (Beane, 1999). Sometimes the victim can quickly recover, other times they will never fully recover emotionally and physically. Victims are “prone to depression, suicide, and other mental health problems throughout their lives” (Starr, 2009, p. 2). The most unfortunate trait of almost all victims is that victims are most often created within the school environment (Starr, 2009).

## Bullying Affects and Interventions

“It is not just the victims and bullies who are affected; people around them are distracted, intimidated, and upset” (Beane, 1999, p. 1). “Students in schools or classrooms with serious bullying problems report feeling less safe and less satisfied with school” (Starr, 2009, p. 1). Witnesses often complain of feeling helpless and vulnerable (Beran, 2005). Family and friends of victims and bullies can also be affected by the bullying incidents. When an individual is bullied, there are a lot of other people who are hurt by it.

School districts across America have enacted various interventions to try and minimize the amount of bullying incidents. Educators try to teach victims how to get help, as well as minimize the affects an incident has on them. The interventions vary in effectiveness. Some interventions, such as classroom lectures, tend not to effectively decrease the amount of bullying taking place (Hunt, 2007). Research has also yielded results proving that certain interventions are more effective with younger children while others with older students (Olweus, 1999). Programs that are more effective with younger children tend consist of clearly defined consequences for rule breaking and other unacceptable behavior (Nordahl, Poole, Stanton, Walden & Beran, 2008). Adolescents are best reached through an intervention that encourage students to take the perspective of the victims and evokes a sense of empathy (Baldry & Farrington).

One of the more common approaches to solving the after affects of bullying is to use conflict resolution. There are eight steps that can be used to work through an incident according to Beane:

1. Step away from the incident and *cool down*. Trying to be objective while still angry or upset is not possible.
2. All parties are given an opportunity to describe the conflict.
3. All parties determine the antecedent for the conflict.
4. Feelings raised by the conflict are discussed.
5. Each party must respectfully listen to the other.
6. Together, brainstorm solutions to the conflict.
7. Try the solutions.
8. If they fail, brainstorm more solutions. If no solution can be reached, agree to respectfully disagree.

Other school districts feel that having a zero tolerance policy is more effective.

Educators who follow this model believe that immediate response is crucial (Bully-proof your classroom). According to the Teacher Vision article, there are five steps that should be followed immediately after a bullying incident:

1. The individual being bullied or teased needs to be carefully listened to.
2. The bully should be privately spoken to about altercation and motivation behind altercation should be determined.
3. Both parties should be brought together and spoken to about the incident and agreement should be reached about any future interactions.
4. If appropriate, principal and parents should be informed.
5. Determine if further action is necessary (counseling or contracts).

There are other variations of the above methods, but in most school districts the two processes above are what are used.

### Literature-Based Instruction

“Literature-based instruction is the type of instruction in which author’s original narrative and expository works are used as the core for experiences to support children in developing literacy” (Pikulski & Cooper, 1997, p. 13). “For decades, research has concluded that children's books not only provide great pleasure to readers, but they can also play a significant role in children's academic, social, and literacy success” (Hoewisch, 2000, p. 1). “Children’s literature influences how children conceive different social groups, gender and proper and improper behavior” (Ferrarelli, p. 63). Literature plays an important role in providing students with a means to perceive a new perspective into other peoples’ lives (Vandergrift, 1995).

“Children’s literature has emerged as an important resource in contemporary elementary reading curricula” (Serafini, p. 8). An affective practice is to incorporate “anti-bullying component(s) into existing curriculum” (Stop Bullying, p.7). Students should be exposed to a variety of literature to form the strongest understanding of a topic (Vandergrift, 1995). “Quality trade-book literature, as opposed to the contrived literature of basals, speaks directly to the emotional development of youngsters, as well as to their interests, needs, and concerns” (Palardy, 2007, p. 67). Teacher research has shown the success of literature-based instruction across all grades and subject matter (Palardy, 2007). “Literature-based instruction will not be one of education’s well-known “passing fancies” (Palardy, 2007, p. 49).

## Critical Literacy

“The term *critical literacy* describes a pedagogical approach to reading that focuses on the political, sociocultural, historical, and economic forces that shape young students’ lives” (Soares & Wood, 2010, p. 487). There are four components of critical literacy, “(1) teaching and learning that challenges students to look at life through a new lens (2) investigates multiple viewpoints to discern and listen to diverse perspectives (3) discussions focus on sociopolitical relationships (4) children need to be invited to take action” (Kasten, Kristo, McClure & Garthwait, 2005, p. 205). "Critical literacy involves using books, especially fiction, to raise issues that require students to ponder aspects of life. Through books, then, teachers can initiate deeper discussions, encourage cultural thinking, and perhaps even shape attitudes" (Kasten, Kristo, McClure & Garthwait, 2005, p. 169). Critical literacy “encourages students to explore issues regarding critical questioning of social institutions, inequities, and the status quo” (Kasten, Kristo, McClure & Garthwait, 2005, p. 204).

“When faced with a difficult situation, many parents and teachers look for a book to help explain, to provide a conversation-starter, or to fill in the gaps in their own understanding so as to better address the situation at hand” (Thibault, p. 1). In Ferrarelli’s 2007, *Children’s Literature and Gender*, Cervetti, Pardales, and Damico were quoted, “students of critical literacy approach textual meaning making a process of construction, not exegesis; one imbues a text with meaning rather than extracting meaning from it. More important, textual meaning is understood in the context of social, historic, and power relations, not solely as the product or intention of an author. Further, reading is an act of coming to know the world and a means to social transformation (p. 2).”

By reading critical literature, students gain insight into social and cultural differences as well as other sensitive topics that also need to be addressed (Ferrarelli, p. 63). Students are able to discover their own voices and feelings on these sensitive topics (Butler, O. E. & McCunn, R. L., 2010). Teachers use critical literature in the classroom to assist their students “through difficult situations, enable individual students to transcend their own challenges, and teach students to consider all viewpoints” (Thibault, p. 1). There is a developmentally appropriate book for every situation that a teacher may have the need to address in the classroom (Thibault, p. 6).

### Learning Communities in Classrooms

“In recent years in America there has developed a ‘learning-communities’ approach to education” (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999, p. 1). Learning communities promote a more advance knowledge of social issues (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999). Students comprehend material more effectively when given the chance to work through problems, and make sense of the information rather than be lectured to (Watkins, 2005). The benefits of a learning community depend on the values and relations that form among the members of the community. (Watkins, 2005) According to Bielaczyc and Collins in their 1999 study, there are four characteristics that learning communities share:

1. Members come from different backgrounds with different experiences, and are respected and valued for their contributions.
2. Experiences are shared to advance the collective knowledge of the members.
3. Participants focus on learning how to learn.
4. Mechanisms are in place to ensure sharing is done in a respectful manner.

Students need to be able to listen to and learn from others to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999). Adults and children alike need to be able to work with and listen to all different types of people (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999). Learning communities establish a safe environment for students to learn how to work with other students even if they do not typically work well together (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999). The world presents more challenges and in order for students to be successful they must “be able to direct their own learning, communicate and work with people from diverse backgrounds and views, and develop ways of dealing with complex issues and problems that require different kinds of experiences” (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999, p. 3). Students learn that “failure is okay” as long as they work together. (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999, p. 8) “Taking risks and an experimental approach will lead to more learning” (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999, p. 8).

The members of the learning community need to “take advantage of the knowledge of all its members” (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999, p. 6). Students will work harder for a school in which they feel a strong sense of belonging (Watkins, 2005). Research proves that students who attend schools that form strong learning communities are less likely to commit crimes and use drugs (Watkins, 2005). In a strong learning community, students learn to respect one another and the ideas each member shares with the community. (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999)

### Read Alouds

“Read aloud is an instructional practice where teachers, parents, and caregivers read texts aloud to children” (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009, p. 112). Read alouds

provide teachers with the opportunity to capture the students' attention and focus the follow up conversation on the target topic (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009). During read alouds, students focus on the content and the illustrations, not the print structure (Justice, McGinty, Piast, Kaderavek, & Xitao, 2010). Studies show that read alouds increase comprehension growth (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009). The study on first and second graders, shows that read alouds effectively deepen student understanding as long as the content is discussed during and after the readings (Heisey & Kucan, 2010). Students are able to develop the deepened understanding by drawing on prior knowledge and various comprehension strategies (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009). Examples of these comprehension strategies are "question answering, question generating, making connections, and presenting alternative perspectives" (Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009, p. 111).

### Conclusions

This review of the literature examines the topic of bullying and points to the need for intervention programs. Bullies, victims and bystanders are all negatively affected by bullying incidents. Students need to be educated on methods of stopping a bully, and preventing themselves from becoming the victim of a bully. This thesis is closely examining the affects of teaching students about bullying through literature. There is a vast amount of children's books that are available to use in classrooms. As the research has shown, there are various interventions that can be used, but not all of them are affective. Critical literacy proves to be a popular method used by teachers to deal with sensitive issues. Read alouds have proven to deepen student comprehension across



curriculum. Using literature may open doors for many students to be able to stand up to bullies, and minimize the effects of bullying.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Content and Design**

#### Methodology

This chapter discusses the details of the research design and the methodology of this study. The context of the study will explain the natural environment in which the research was conducted. The research design discusses the sources of data, method of data collection, and how the data will be analyzed and interrupted. The timeline and procedures used in this study are discussed as well.

#### Context of Study

##### School

The Voorhees Township Public Schools services about three thousand students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Voorhees Township is a suburban community located less than twenty miles east of Philadelphia. The median family income is among the highest in South Jersey. Voorhees was formed when six “neighborhood” communities merged together: Glendale, Ashland, Kirkwood, Kresson, Osage and Gibbsboro. Gibbsboro later seceded from Voorhees to once again become its own town. Today Voorhees is bordered by Gibbsboro, Somerdale, Lawnside, Tavistock, Haddonfield, Marlton and Evesham Township.

Osage Elementary School is located in Voorhees, New Jersey and services on average six hundred students ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade. According to the *New Jersey Department of Education 2009-2010 School Report Card*, about 20% of

students attending Osage speak a language other than English at home. The average class size is 17.5 students. Students are in school for just under six in a half hour from 9:00 a.m. to 3:25 p.m. with forty minutes for lunch and recess. The district spent \$14,262 on each student for the 2009-2010 school year. The state average was \$14,288.

Every classroom is equipped with a Smartboard. The majority of instruction involves the use of the Smartboard. Each teacher is also provided with a laptop. There is also a cart of laptops that is shared within each grade level. There are enough laptops in each grade, for every student in one class. Several of the classrooms also have a handful of computers that can be used as a center.

The average faculty member has 19 years experience and the average salary is \$84,704. Both numbers are high than the state's average of 10 years experience and a salary of \$57,560. The administrators also have more experience, district average of 31 years where the state's average is only 18 years. As a result, the district's average administrators salary is \$138,162 where the state's average is only \$108,974. The percentage of faculty and administrators with a bachelor's degree is 61.8% and 38.2% with a master's degree. No administrator nor faculty member has a doctorate as of the 2009-2010 school year, according to the *New Jersey Department of Education 2009-2010 Report Card*.

### Participants

There are twenty three third grade students in the homeroom of the class involved in the study. Twenty returned signed permission slips by a parent or guardian and agreed to participate in the study. The participants were both male and female and ranged in ages

from eight to ten years old. Five students that participated in the study have Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) and one is in the process of being referred for an evaluation.

## Research Design

### Research

The research was conducted in a natural setting, meaning the data is collected in a manner that will not interfere with the typical classroom environment (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The study consists of qualitative research. Qualitative research is more valuable in this study because this researcher will be investigating students' perceptions and thoughts about bullying (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 2009). The data will be obtained through surveys, classroom discussions, observations, and this researcher's teacher research journal. After the research is obtained, this researcher will utilize the information to determine students' comprehension of bullying and methods of coping with a bully.

### Source of Data

A survey will be conducted on the first day of the study that will inquire into whether the students have ever been bullied, witnessed bullying, or were bullies. The survey will also inquire into how the students did, and/or would cope with a bullying situation. The survey will also include questions about how the students' feel the relationships between students effects the number of bullying incidents in a classroom. This researcher will collect the surveys and chart them so that at the conclusion of the study, the same survey can be completed, and the results analyzed.

The research will be conducted in a unit of study. This researcher will teach a unit on bullying, and the data will be collected through observations, teacher research journal, and the various surveys administered. The teacher will conduct several read-alouds throughout the study. Students will discuss each read-aloud in whole group and/or small group discussions. The students will complete surveys based on the stories read in class.

For each read aloud, the students will be called to the front of the room and seated on the floor. The teacher will sit in a small chair so that all of the students can see the pictures and the researcher reading the story. The teacher will begin with *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes. The story discusses the experiences a young mouse has when she gets teased by her classmates about her name. Up until she started school, *Chrysanthemum* thought her name was absolutely perfect. The other students in the class teased her because she was named after a flower. The story ends with the teacher telling all the students that she too is named after a flower, and that she plans on naming her daughter *Chrysanthemum*. All of the students suddenly become envious of *Chrysanthemum* and asked to be named after flowers also.

The second book that will be read is *Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully* by Audrey Penn. In this story, the young forest animals are being bullied by the badger. Chester and his friends tell Chester's mom about the badger and she tells them a story about when the forest animals worked together to smooth out a jagged blue stone found in the forest. The young forest animals worked together to smooth out the rough edges of the badger and turned him into a friend.

Matthew and the Bullies by Sarah, Dutchess of York will be read next. Matthew has a big presentation coming up, and he is scared to present because some of the boys in the class bully him. His mom finally convinces him to tell her all about the problem and she calls the teacher to inform her of the issue. The day of the presentation, the teacher meets with the bullies in the morning and asks them why they are bullying Matthew, the boys realize that they did not know. In the end the boys all become friends.

The final story used in this study is My Secret Bully by Trudy Ludwig. In this story, Monica is being bullied by her best friend Katie. Since the two girls are best friends, no one suspects that there is a problem. Monica finally breaks down and talks with her mom about the way Katie is treating her. Monica's mom role plays with Monica and helps her prepare for the next time she sees Katie. The next morning, Monica confronted Katie and asked her if "making me feel bad makes you feel good?" Katie was upset by this and Monica knew she would never be hurt by Katie again. The story ended with Monica explaining that they never saw each other again, and though that made Monica sad, she now knows that real friends are kind and supportive of one another.

### Data Analysis

This researcher will take notes on each of the discussions and keep a log in the teacher research journal about any bullying incidents that occur during this study. The surveys will all be collected and the responses recorded into charts. All surveys will be anonymous. The data will then be closely analyzed. This researcher will look at the kinds of bullying episodes and the frequency of occurrences. The questions asked during the discussion, the overall mood of the class, and the responses to the teacher's questions will

all be examined. The bullying episodes, discussions and the survey results will all be considered in developing a final conclusion.

### Looking Ahead

In chapter four, the results of this study will be reviewed and analyzed. All of the methods of data collection will be analyzed individually, and then combined together to form a conclusion in chapter five.

## Chapter Four

### Findings of the Study

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study to answer the researcher's questions that asks, *What happens when I use literature to educate third graders about bullying?* This question was also broken into sub questions: *How do read alouds help students relate to bullying situations? Will students prefer to learn about sensitive issues, such as bullying, through read alouds and discussions? Would read alouds assist students in recognizing bullying situations?* Notes taken from group discussions, my teacher research journal, the initial and final surveys and the questionnaires given at the conclusion of each read aloud and discussion are used to draw conclusions regarding using literature to teach third graders about bullying.

#### Research Findings

##### Taking an Inquiry Stance Towards Student Understanding of Bullying: What They Know and What They Learned

On Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the initial anonymous survey was conducted. The survey was conducted in order to assess how many of the students have been bullied and how much about bullying they knew such as where it takes place and what to do if they are bullied or witness someone else being bullied. The students were asked to answer ten yes or no questions about their experiences with bullying. Of the students surveyed, 50% stated that they had in fact witnessed a bullying incident, and 81.3% stated that they were



bullied themselves. None of the students reported that they ever bullied another individual.

About one month later, Thursday, May 5, 2011, after the read alouds and discussions were conducted, the survey was re-administered. On this survey, the students were again asked if they were ever the victim of a bullying situation, 78.9% of the students said that they were victims of a bully. When asked if they had witnessed a bullying incident, 57.9% of the students answered in the affirmative.

The table below contains data that reflects the student responses from the surveys conducted on April 6<sup>th</sup> and May 5<sup>th</sup>. It is based on response from 16 students.

<b>Initial/Final Surveys</b>		
	Percent that answered Yes on April 6 <sup>th</sup>	Percent that answered Yes on May 5 <sup>th</sup>
Have you ever seen someone else being bullied?	50%	57.9%
Have you ever been bullied?	81.3%	78.9%
Have you ever bullied someone?	0%	0%
Have you ever told an adult if you or someone you know were being bullied?	62.5%	73.7%
If you see someone being bullied, would you tell an adult?	100%	100%
Have you ever told a bully to leave the person they were bullying alone?	62.5%	68.4%
If you see someone bullying, would you tell them to stop?	100%	84.2%
Do you feel bullying occurs at Osage Elementary?	62.5%	52.6%
Have you seen bullying at Osage Elementary?	81.3%	52.6%
Do you think there are ways to protect yourself from being bullied?	93.8%	94.7%

Looking closely at the data, I noticed a significant difference in the outcome of the initial survey and the final survey with the questions revolving around Osage Elementary. The students seemed to have changed their opinions of how often bullying occurs at Osage. In both questions, a number of students changed their answers from affirming they feel that bullying occurs, or that they have in fact witness bullying at Osage Elementary to the negative. This indicates that the students have a better understanding of what bullying is. After the bullying lessons, the students understood not every altercation is bullying.

### Recognizing Bullying Situations

In January of 2011, I began observing the third graders that were participating in this study. I immediately noted tension between two girls in the class. The mothers were in contact with the teachers. The two girls repeatedly told on each other, but no clear bullying situation was observed. There never appeared to be a true bully and a true victim.

There were also other incidents of students complaining to the teachers of incidents in the bathroom and on the play ground. All of these incidents, however, were isolated events and did not fit the signs of bullying incidents. Examples of these incidents were:

- A boy was throwing toilet paper in the bathroom.
- A student made an inappropriate comment on the school bus.
- One student called another student a name.
- Two students sitting next to each other in class had a disagreement.

- An inappropriate picture was drawn, supposedly, of another student.

Some of these events involved the same one or two students, but it varied whether the student was the antagonist or the victim. Often times, the “other” student involved changed from incident to incident.

After the bullying lessons there was also a change in the type of *issues* the students were coming up to the teachers about. Looking at my teacher journal, I noticed there were very few entries from the middle of April until the beginning of May when we returned from Spring Break. The lack of entries was a direct result of the lack of incidents. This was the time period that the bullying lessons were being conducted, but this was also the time period where, according to the Principal at the April faculty meeting, “we start seeing more and more issues of bullying.”

After taking a closer look at the incidents that occurred after the completion of the bullying lessons, I noticed that they were not the same kinds of complaints. On May 5<sup>th</sup> in particular, there were three incidents. The following are anecdote records of two events pulled from my research journal.

J and P were talking outside before school. F, a third grader in a different class came over and started blowing weeds and grass. J explained that "weeds attract bugs and please don't blow them on me". F left, then came back and started blowing the leaves, grass and weeds onto J. She yelled at her to stop. F laughed and kept doing it. The other classmates, A. D., A. S. and P all chimed in and told F to leave J alone. J tried to move and F followed her. The classmates started to tell J to just run away from F. F began to yell at the other students to bud out. My students were pretty upset. The whistle was blown so they decided to wait to tell Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Star and myself about the incident.

Taken from Teacher Research Journal Entry, May 5<sup>th</sup>

J told C and S that a boy, N, from another class is gay. They told her it was not very nice to say about someone and tried to ask her not to do it again. They were both upset because she just argued with them. They both came to me to discuss what happened and what they should do. J came up to me right after and told me that she is best friends with him and that he *is* and he and his mom already know and she would say it in front of him because it was true. I told her that some things are personal and people share them with close friends and family, but do not want other people to know. I explained to her it is his choice to share personal information about him and his family, it is not her place.

Taken from Teacher Research Journal Entry, May 5<sup>th</sup>

The actions of the students involved in each of these events could easily be seen as a bullying situation. As we know, bullying occurs when the offence is repeated over and over again. These were the kinds of issues the students were now bringing to the teachers and me.

Findings that Address the Question, *Would read alouds assist students in recognizing bullying situations?*

Looking at all the data shown thus far, I began to realize that the students were developing a different perspective of what a bully and a bullying situation entails. They

no longer were *tattle-tailing* but bring real issues before the adults so that the adults could deal with them. The students also took it upon themselves more and more to work out the smaller issues, and sometimes, as you can see with the above two vignettes, the students worked to solve the more difficult issues too. Only when they could reach no solution, did they come to the adults for further assistance.

### Relating to Character and Connecting to Text to Understand Bullying

At the conclusion of each discussion, each student was provided with a questionnaire. The last question was designed to encourage the students to relate to the story and to the events in the story. My goal was to encourage them to think about the bullying situations at a deeper level and determine in one character's position, what they would have done. The question stated, *Name the character you related to the most in the story. Explain how the actions of the character were similar to how you would have responded to the bullying of \_\_\_\_\_.* In each questionnaire I inserted the name of the victim in the story.

Since *Chrysanthemum* was the first story read to the class, I examined those responses first. All of the students who answered the question responded that they related to either *Chrysanthemum* or the teacher, Mrs. Twinkle. The responses are organized in the table below.

<b>What Character Can you Most Relate to in Chrysanthemum?</b>	
Student Responses	Number of Students with Response
Chrysanthemum with no explanation	2
Mrs. Twinkle (the teacher) with no explanation	1
Mrs. Twinkle and Chrysanthemum	1
Chrysanthemum because they are currently, or have been bullied.	5
Mrs. Twinkle because they step in when they see someone being bullied.	2

A small group of students either left the answer blank or responded that they did not know which character they related to. One student responded that they did not relate to any of the characters because they don't bully, never have been bullied, and they don't want to get involved in anything involving a bully or bullying situation. One student responded that they related to Chrysanthemum because they are currently being bullied by another student in the class.

Since the responses were anonymous I did not know which student(s) made the claims against their fellow classmates, however I used the knowledge gained to indirectly address the issues in my next lesson.

The second story read was *Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully*. I organized the responses to the question into the table below.

What Character Can you Most Relate to in Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully?	
Character	Number of Students
Chester	10
Classmates	2
Mom	3
Badger	1
No Response	2

From this data, I saw the advantage of allowing students to express their true feelings under the safety of anonymity. One student did state, *I am sometimes like the badger because I am sometimes mean*. If I asked the students to identify themselves, I do not feel I would have received the same level of honesty.

The third story read was *Matthew and the Bullies*. Of all the students who participated in this lesson, 73.6% stated that they related closest with Matthew, and of those students, 44% responded that they have been the victims of a bully.

For the final story, *My Secret Bully*, I again organized the responses into a table. The table can be viewed below.

<b>What Character Can you Most Relate to in My Secret Bully?</b>	
Students that responded Monica without an explanation.	6
Students that responded Monica because they were bullied.	3
Students that responded Monica because they would keep it a secret.	1
Students that responded Monica because they would stand up for themselves.	1
Students that responded the Mom.	2
Students that responded the Mom and Sarah.	1
Students that responded Sarah.	2
Students that responded that they could not relate to any of the characters.	3

\* Sarah was the friend caught in the middle of Katie (the bully) and Monica (the victim).

After looking through the data again, I discovered that other questions from the survey also yielded results of how the students were relating to the characters in the story. In the case of the questionnaire following the reading and discussion of *Chrysanthemum*, one student answered the question, *List one thing discussed today that you already knew*, with the following response:

*“Yes I do, her name is C. and I want it to stop today. It is horrible.”*

In this answer, the student was explaining that another student in the class is being picked on. The student expresses their wishes for this behavior to stop. Even though the response did not exactly answer the question, the student was relating to the story and commenting on an event in her life that the story made her think about. Since the questionnaire was anonymous, the student felt safe providing the teacher (this researcher) with the information. This student would not have come forward with this information if they thought the teacher could trace it back to them.

One student made a text-to-self connect to Matthew, in *Matthew and the Bullies*, presenting his project in class because they were in the process of presenting their



geometry projects. The student responded that this was their least favorite part of the story because they do not like having to give presentations either.

I then went back and examined the notes I took from the discussions. The notes yielded interesting findings. After reading about Chester Raccoon, I asked the students for ways to deal with a bully; the students replied that they should stand together as a group, try to show the bully how to be nice and if that fails, then they would ask an adult for help. They did not explain what Chester and Chrysanthemum did, they said what they would do.

During the reading of *Matthew and the Bullies*, the students made suggestions on what Matthew could have done. They expressed agreement when they felt he was making the correct choices. They vocalized when they felt he was making the incorrect choices. The discussion that followed became much deeper than the previous discussions. For the first time the students felt comfortable enough to ask me if I was ever bullied and how I dealt with the bullying situation. The students also began to share some of their feelings about bullying and how the main character could better protect himself against the bullies. One student responded in the questionnaire, that they learned that *the teacher* (this researcher) *got picked on*.

The story, *My Secret Bully*, was much more realistic and seemed to resonate with the students more than the previous stories. Below is an excerpt from my reflection showing my feelings on the mood of the students.

The mood in the class changed after I read this story. The students all seemed pretty upset by it. They were sad that the so called friend could be that mean. They were happy that the main character chose not to see or talk to her bully ever again. It definitely hit the students. They were not up for much of a discussion after the story, but I could see their brains working. It made me wonder if something was going on between the students and the story hit close to home.

Reflection of *My Secret Bully* Lesson, May 4<sup>th</sup>

I believe the students understood based on their body language during my reading of the story that most of the time, the victim does not befriend the bully. In most cases, the victim never wants to see nor speak to the bully again.

Findings that Address the Question: *How do read alouds help students relate to bullying situations?*

The students related to the characters and the events in the stories. These stories centered around the bullying of the main characters. The students were able to identify with one or more of the characters based on their own personal experiences. In one student's case, the student realized that they were in fact a bully. The stories helped the students better understand the role they play in bullying situations. For the students who are victims of bullies, they learned that they are not alone and methods to stop a bully. The students that related to the bystanders saw how important it is for bystanders to speak up and either defend the victim, or tell an adult.

The Impact of Critical Literacy: *Will students prefer to learn about sensitive issues, such as bullying, through read alouds and discussions?*

The second sub question in this study addressed critical literacy. The question stated, To address the results of this answer, I began by examining the questionnaires. The first three questions on the questionnaires address this thesis sub question. The questions were as follows:

1. Did you enjoy the story?
2. Which part of the lesson was your favorite?
3. Which part of the lesson was your least favorite?

The first question was very effective in determining whether or not the students liked the books selected for this study. After examining all of the questionnaires, I created

<b>Did you Enjoy the Story?</b>			
<b>Title of Book</b>	<b>Students Responded Yes</b>	<b>Students Responded No</b>	<b>Total # of Students</b>
<i>Chrysanthemum</i>	13	0	13
<i>Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully</i>	18	0	18
<i>Matthew and the Bullies</i>	18	1	19
<i>My Secret Bully</i>	16	1	18

a table, shown below, displaying the responses to this question for all of the books.

Looking at the responses from *My Secret Bully*, 16 of the students replied yes, one student stated that they did not like the story and one student did not answer the question. Of the 16 students who responded that they did enjoy the story, four either underlined or added an explanation point to the response. Two students also placed an explanation

point at the end of the word *yes* for their response to whether they enjoyed the book *Matthew and the Bullies*. Those students are expressing that they really enjoyed the story.

When asked what their favorite and least favorite part of the lesson was, most students referred to parts of the stories. Those results were again broken up based on the book and will be discussed in the order of the book being read.

Beginning with the story *Chrysanthemum*, samples of the most common answers to the students' favorite parts of the lesson can be seen below.

- When the music teacher said that her name is a flower (five students)
- Chrysanthemum was born (three students)
- When Victoria forgot her lines/the end of the story (four students)

About one third of the students that were present and had permission to participate in this study answered that they liked when the class found out the teacher's name. The second third of the participants liked when Victoria forgot her lines, and the rest of the students became friends with Chrysanthemum. The students enjoyed listening to the story when the bully fail and the victim rose to success.

On the contrary, the students did not like when Chrysanthemum was being bullied. When asked to identify their least favorite portion of the lesson, again all the students referred to the story. All of the students referred to the part of the story when Chrysanthemum was bullied. Samples are the responses are shown below.

- When the children were laughing.
- When Chrysanthemum was getting teased.

- When Victoria was mean.
- When she was bullied.
- When people were making fun of her name.

Examining the responses to the same questions regarding *Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully*, there were three general responses to the students’ favorite part of the lesson, which are displayed in the table below.

<b>Favorite Part of the Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully Lesson</b>	
Students’ Response	Number of Students with the Response
When Chester’s mom told the story.	2
When the teacher read the story.	2
When the animals asked the badger to play.	14

The third question dealt with the students’ least favorite portion of the lesson, and with very few exceptions, the students responded that they did not like when the badger was bullying the small forest animals and Chester. There were a few standard responses to the question inquiring what the students already knew. The responses are listed below.

- Bullies are mean. (1 student)
- Parents can help solve problems. (1 student)
- Bullies have little tender hearts that you just have to find/make friends with the bully and they will become a nicer person. (6 students)
- Stand up to the bully. (1 student)
- That they were going to get bullied, but then figure out a way to solve the problem. (3 students)

- Never bully. (2 students)

Three students chose not to respond to this question. Since participation was optional, I did not force any student to complete the questionnaire. They answered as little or as much as they felt comfortable answering. I did remind them that the questionnaires will remain anonymous.

For *Matthew and the Bullies*, all of the students referred to a part of the story as their favorite and least favorite part of the lesson. When asked about their favorite part of the story, half the class like the end, when Matthew, the victim, and Jon, the bully, became friends. The other half of the class liked when the mother found the bruises and had a talk with Matthew about what was going on at school. As expected, almost the whole class stated that their least favorite part of the lesson was when Matthew was bullied. One student expressed a different point of view. This student did not like when Matthew had to present his project. The students made a text-to-self connect to Matthew presenting his project in class because they were in the process of presenting their geometry projects.

The final questionnaire I examined was *My Secret Bully*. In most cases the students listed their favorite or least favorite portion of the story. Below you will find two tables. The one of the top displays the responses for the students' favorite parts of the lesson. The one of the bottom displays the responses for the students' least favorite part of the lesson.

<b>Which Part of the My Secret Bully Lesson was your Favorite?</b>	
When Monica confronted the bully, Katie.	5 students
I liked it all!	1 student
Talking about the story.	1 student
When Monica told her mom about Katie.	5 students
When Monica told the baby sitter about Katie.	1 student
The end of the story.	3 students
I don't know!	2 students

<b>Which Part of the My Secret Bully Lesson was your Least Favorite?</b>	
When Katie didn't let Monica play/When Katie bullied Monica.	15 students
When we found out that Katie and Monica never became friends again.	1 student
I don't know or I don't remember.	2 students

I was not surprised that so many students were upset about Monica being bullied, but I was surprised that only one student mentioned Monica not wanting to ever see Katie again. I believe the students understood based on their body language during my reading of the story that most of the time, the victim does not befriend the bully. In most cases, the victim never wants to see nor speak to the bully again.

Another method that effectively documented the feelings of the class was the notes taken after each discussion. The reflections show a change in mood about the story, but a constant theme of the students being excited to be listening to a read aloud.

Again beginning with *Chrysanthemum*, the first reflection discussed how the students were polite and seemed interested in the story. They answered all the questions I asked after the story, but no real discussion took place. The students expressed that they liked being read to, but I was unsure that they learned anything about bullying from the story.

My reflection on the discussion following *Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully* expressed how interested the students were in the story. It also touched on the class making connections to Chrysanthemum. I also noted that this lesson was conducted just before a party, yet the students' complete attention was on the lesson. The students viewed being read to by the teacher a treat, and therefore they were more inclined to pay attention to the message I was teaching.

The *Matthew and the Bullies* discussion became much deeper than the previous discussions. For the first time the students felt comfortable enough to ask me if I was ever bullied and how I dealt with the bullying situation. The students also began to share some of their feelings about bullying and how the main character could better protect himself against the bullies. Though I did not find this to be one of the more entertaining books, the students interacted with the story while I read. They made suggestions on what Matthew could have done. They expressed agreement when they felt he was making the correct choices. They vocalized when they felt he was making the incorrect choices. All and all the class was much more engaged in this particular read aloud.

The final discussion was following *My Secret Bully*. In my reflection about this lesson, I stated:



When I called the kids to the front to read the story, they were really excited that I was reading to them again. They all cheered and hurried to the front of the room.

Reflection of *My Secret Bully* Lesson, May 4th

I went on to describe how much the mood of the class changed. The story was much more realistic and seemed to resonate with the students more than the previous stories. Below is an excerpt from my reflection showing my feelings on the mood of the students.

The mood in the class changed after I read this story. The students all seemed pretty upset by it. They were sad that the so called friend could be that mean. They were happy that the main character chose not to see or talk to her bully ever again. It definitely hit the students. They were not up for much of a discussion after the story, but I could see their brains working. It made me wonder if something was going on between the students and the story hit close to home.

Reflection of *My Secret Bully* Lesson, May 4<sup>th</sup>

Findings that Address the Question: *Will students prefer to learn about sensitive issues, such as bullying, through read alouds and discussions?*

The findings show that the students were actively engaged in the stories and the vast majority of the students even stated that they enjoyed the stories. Almost all of the students referred to the story when asked about their favorite and least favorite portion of the lesson. The notes from the discussions show how engaged the students were in the

story through my reflections on the attitudes and body language of the students and the types of questions the students asked during the discussions. The cheering and smiles the students exhibited when called to the front of the room for the read alouds also confirm the feelings the students had about the read alouds. At no point did the students show signs of discuss about the read alouds. They certainly did show signs of annoyance when it came time to complete the questionnaires! Their responses to the read alouds and discussions were always positive.

### How did Using Literature Educate about Bullying?

Three questions in the questionnaire directly deal with the main question of this study.

1. List at least one thing discussed today that you already knew.
2. List at least one thing you learned from today's lesson.
3. List at least one thing you still would like to learn or a question you have after today's lesson.

Beginning with the story *Chrysanthemum*, the responses to the fourth question were interesting. Some of the responses did not make sense to the question, list at least one thing they knew before the start of the lesson, and it was obvious the student was not taking the questionnaire seriously. Some of those answers were, *it was hot* and *I knew tea*. However, there were other answers that showed that some of the students were really thinking. Samples of those answers are found below.

- People sometimes bully other people who are good and nice.
- Sometimes people do make fun of other people.

- Never bully

The fifth question asked for at least one thing the students learned during the lesson. All of the students answered along the same lines. Every student responded that they should behave and not bully other people.

I wanted to give the students an opportunity to ask questions so the sixth question stated, “List at least one thing you still would like to learn or a question you have after today’s lesson.” Some of the answers were very philosophical as seen below.

- Do they like to make fun of people?
- Why is it called bullying?
- I would like to know why people have to be mean.

Some of the students asked questions that directly pertained to this study:

- How not to be a bully.
- How to stop someone who is bullying another person when there is no adult around.

Examining *Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully*, all students who responded to the question about what they learned answered one of three ways: work together, be nice to the bully and that bullies can change. The lingering questions tie into these responses. Several of the students asked what to do if they are nice to the bully, but the bully is still mean to them. Other students questioned why the bully was mean in the first place and how long he will remain nice to the other forest animals.

The responses for the questionnaires about *Matthew and the Bullies* are examined in the next few paragraphs. The fourth question asked for the students to list one thing they already knew prior to the lesson. There were two standard responses, *do not bully* and *if you or someone you know is bullied, tell an adult right away*. The point of this story was to teach students that it is acceptable for a student to tell an adult if they are someone they know is being bullied.

The following table shows the most common answers to the question, *list at least one thing discussed today that you learned*.

<b>What did you Learn from the Matthew and the Bullies Lesson?</b>	
Do not bully someone back.	7
Do not fight with a bully, you will get in trouble.	3
Tell your parents/family or an adult about a bully	3

Many of the boys were surprised that the mom told Matthew not to fight with the bully. I explained to the class that if you fight the bully, then you are both in trouble. By telling an adult and talking it through like Matthew did, you may come up with a better answer. One student responded that they learned that their teacher (this researcher) got picked on. As stated before, during the discussion portion of this lesson, the students questioned whether I was ever bullied and ask how I solved my bullying problem. I told them how I did go to my family for help much like Matthew did.

When asked what the students still wanted to learn, 31.5% of the students wanted to know why people bullied other people, 15.8% asked about telling their parents and 42.1% felt there was nothing left for them to learn.

The final read aloud shared with the class was *My Secret Bully*. Below is a sample of the responses explaining what they understood prior to this lesson.

- To talk to an adult.
- Never try to keep it a secret.
- I knew you should tell someone about the probe if someone is bullying you.
- I know what I know based on the previous stories.
- Don't be friends with a bully.
- Tell a parent.
- Always stand up for yourself.
- I learned that you should tell your feelings to the bully.
- Never stop a bully by being a bully.
- Never give up when someone is bullying you!
- Friends can change.
- Real friends are nice and kind.
- You don't have to become friends with your bully.

I then looked at the responses to what the students learned from this lesson, and below you can find a sample of those responses.

The sixth question asked the students if there was anything they would still like to learn about bullying. The majority of the students (61%) either stated that there was nothing they still wanted to learn (9 students) or they did not reply to the question (2 students). Two students also provided irrelevant answers such as *was it fun*. The remainder of the students asked the following.

- Why was the bully mean? (2 students)
- Why do people bully? (1 student)
- Why tell your parents? (1 student)
- Can you be a bully if they are being mean to you? (1 student)

Examining all of the responses to questions four through six on the questionnaires, the findings prove that the students were learning about bullying. One student even stated that everything they now know, they know from the bullying lessons. The lingering questions show how the mindset of the students changed throughout the lessons. The most important proof that the students learned about bullying was the amount of students who stated that there was nothing left for them to learn after the final lesson. Compare that to the questions the students had after the first three lessons, progress is evident.

### Results of the Bullying Lessons

The bullying lessons yielded a number of results. There are five main outcomes that the data strongly supports from the bullying lessons. To develop these outcomes, I focused on the discussions that followed each read aloud and the questionnaires that followed each discussion.

1. Students feel comfortable sharing information about a bully or a victim if the information is provided in a truly anonymous method. In the first two questionnaires, several students confessed that there were students being bullied in the class, and who the bully was. In the questionnaire about Chester Raccoon, one student even confessed that they were a bully.
2. Students were learning about bullying from the stories and the discussions. As we progressed through the lessons, students were making connections to the previous bullying lessons in the discussions as well as in the questionnaires. Students also stated that they learned to tell adults, stand up to bullies and never become a bully when asked what they learned. Students were able to see themselves as having a role in issues around bullying.
3. Critical texts help engage students in discussion about critical issues. Students enjoy learning about bullying issues through read alouds using critical literature. The students often cheered when I called them to the front of the room for a read aloud. The overwhelming majority of the students also stated, in the questionnaires, that they enjoyed all of the stories. Most of the students referred to the stories as their favorite part of the lessons.
4. By allowing students to relate to the characters in the stories, the students gained a better understanding of bullying situations and the roles they play. Read alouds were vital in this process because read alouds allow students to focus on the content and illustrations of the story. This narrowed their focus to the topic the researcher wished to address, in this case bullying.

5. Learning communities promote a more advance knowledge of social issues (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999). In this study, a learning community centered on bullying was developed. Within this learning community, students were able to address their concerns and thoughts about bullying, and together develop a deeper understanding. Based all the types of “bullying events” reported prior to the bullying lessons, and the “bullying events” reported after the bullying lessons, the student learned how to recognize bullying and when to report the problem.

The outcomes stated above also answer the thesis question, and each of the sub questions addressed throughout this study. Overall, this study supports that using literature to educate third grade students about bullying is an effective method.



## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion of Results**

#### Overview of the Chapter

This chapter begins with a discussion of the importance of this study and who would benefit by reading this study. The conclusions that result from data collected in this study are summarized. Finally, the implications of the study for further research are suggested.

#### Importance of this Study

Bullying is a serious issue in schools across the country and in the media. Schools are feeling the pressure to develop more effective and relative methods to educate the student body about bullying. This study provides an alternate method of educating students about bullying by using literature. It is a well known fact that literature allows the reader to form an understanding of a topic at a higher level. This study suggests that using literature will provide students with a higher understanding of bullying.

Parents and teachers are the groups of people that would most benefit from this study. Most parents begin reading to their children as early as infancy. Many parents use children's books to assist them in discussing specific matters with their children. This study shows the outcomes of using literature to teach about bullying. As a teacher candidate, I understand how hard teachers work to create unique and motivating lessons. Most schools now mandate that teachers include bullying lessons into the curriculum. This study provides teachers with the potential outcomes of using read alouds to initiate conversations about bullying in a classroom.

## Conclusions

Students need to be able to express their feelings in an anonymous method. When the students were given the chance to share information with me without me knowing it came from them, they were more honest with their responses, and they took the opportunity to tell me about bullying that was occurring within the classroom. One student even confessed that they were in fact a bully. They stated that they knew bullying was wrong, but they recognized that they were not being very nice to their fellow classmates.

The students began to develop a new understanding of what bullying is. They were able to see themselves as having a role in issues around bullying. The data shows that the number of complaints about minor offences declined, but the severity of the offences increased. The students began to realize which conflicts needed attention of an adult. The people involved in the conflicts also changed. My students, more and more, were the victims, and it was students from other classes named as the aggressors. The students in my class were also more likely to stand up for the victim, and come to myself or one of the other teachers for help. Even the data from the bullying lessons showed that the students began to better understand bullying. Students acknowledge learning new methods to stop a bully.

Using critical literature for read alouds allows students to become more engaged in the subject matter. Read alouds provide students with an opportunity to focus solely on the content and illustrations. This allows them to develop a deeper understanding of the topic. Students also found this enjoyable based on the cheers just before every read aloud.

While student teaching in the class, I found it generally difficult to engage the students in an on topic discussion. The students were engaged in the discussions following the read alouds, and the conversations stayed on topic.

As a result of the read alouds, students were able to relate to the characters in the stories. This allowed them to develop a better understanding of the roles they play in a bullying situation. By the second read aloud, one student recognized themselves as a bully. They realized that the character they related to the most was the bully. Other students recognized themselves as the bystanders, and often times explained that they understand the importance of stepping in or telling an adult. Most of the students recognized themselves as the victim of a bully.

This study promoted the creation of a learning community centered on bullying. The students were able to share their knowledge with one another and gain a deeper understanding about bullying through a collaborative learning. The findings showed that the students began to understand minor issues such as name calling and foul language did not constitute bullying. As the lessons progressed, the students began to limit the number of *tattle-tailing* and increased the number of serious incidents reported. Two examples discussed in this study included, a student threatening another student and a student repeatedly harassing another student. Though these were isolated incidents, and alone not considered bullying, if more incidents were to occur, it could progress into bullying.

Using literature to educate students about bullying is an effective method. Students' understanding about the controversial issue expanded beyond what their peers understood.

### Limitations of this Study

There were limitations that I faced while conducting this study. The most important limitation which was briefly addressed early in the chapter was time. As a result of being a student teacher in someone else's classroom, and having the NJASK testing rapidly approaching, the amount of time I had to conduct this study was limited. At the same time, the lessons were not able to be conducted as often as I would have liked. Often times I was only able to conduct one lesson in a week.

Also since the students knew that the questionnaires were not being graded, sometimes students would refuse to complete the questionnaire. Other times students rushed through and did not read the questions that were asked. Overall it was difficult to ensure that the students took their participation in this study seriously.

### Suggestions for Future Research

Further research should be administered in different schools across various grade levels. It would be beneficial to understand how the results differ when conducting this study in the upper grades and in varying demographics. Studies should be conducted to test the effectiveness of using literature to teach about bullying in fifth grade, eighth grade, and twelfth grade.

A closer examination of the long term effects of this study should be conducted across the duration of one to two years. The impact this study will have on these students over an extended period of time would be beneficial to document.

## Closing Remarks

This study has not only allowed the students to develop a deeper understanding of bullying, but it has also helped me grow as a teacher candidate and a researcher. I have learned the benefits of teacher research and the importance of learning from findings with an open mind. Several of the findings were indirect and unexpected. One example is the importance of anonymity. Though I knew adults feel more comfortable sharing information when it cannot be traced back to them, I did not expect the students to be so open in the questionnaires.

While conducting the study, I was aware that the students were very excited about the bullying lessons, and on multiple occasions asked when we will be having the next one. The amount of data that showed how excited the students were amazed me. I could not have anticipated the power the bullying lessons would have with the students participating.

The value of research has become evident to me while conducting this study. Research is unbiased and factual. It eliminates the biases of human nature to yield true results. The results in this study taught me about my students and how I can become a better teacher.

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Appendix A  
Permission Slip for Participation

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a graduate student at Rowan University. I will be conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Susan Browne as part of my master's thesis concerning using a variety of literature and activities about bullying. I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this research. The project's objective is to help students become more conscious of bullying and ways of coping with bullies and bullying incidents.

Each child will be invited to participate in various read alouds, group discussions, and role play activities about bullying. All data will be reported in terms of group results; individual results will not be reported. No names will be included in the final report.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in this study will have absolutely no effect on your child's standing in his/her class. At the conclusion of the study a summary of the group results will be made available to all interested parents. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me [goldbe62@students.rowan.edu](mailto:goldbe62@students.rowan.edu) or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Susan Browne, at (856) 256-4500 ext. 3830. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Goldberg

Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below and returning this letter to your child's teacher by March 22nd.

I grant permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study.

I do not grant permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Appendix B  
Initial/Final Survey  
“What do You Know about Bullying?”

# What do You Know about Bullying?

Directions: Please circle YES or NO for each of the following questions. Answer as honestly as possible. DO NOT put your name on the top of the paper.

1. Have you ever seen someone else being bullied? YES NO
2. Have you ever been bullied? YES NO
3. Have you ever bullied someone? YES NO
4. Have you ever told an adult if you or someone you know were being bullied? YES NO
5. If you see someone being bullied, would you tell an adult? YES  
NO
6. Have you ever told a bully to leave the person they were bullying alone? YES NO
7. If you see someone bullying, would you tell them to stop? YES NO
8. Do you feel bullying occurs at Osage Elementary? YES NO
9. Have you seen bullying at Osage Elementary? YES NO
10. Do you think there are ways to protect yourself from being bullied?  
YES NO

Appendix C  
First Bullying Lesson Questionnaire  
“Chrysanthemum”

## Chrysanthemum

Please answer the following questions as complete and honest as possible.

4. Did you enjoy the story?
5. Which part of the lesson was your favorite?
6. Which part of the lesson was your least favorite?
7. List at least one thing discussed today that you already knew.
8. List at least one thing you learned from today's lesson.
9. List at least one thing you still would like to learn or a question you have after today's lesson.
10. Name the character you related to the most in the story. Explain how the actions of the character were similar to how you would have responded to the bullying of Chrysanthemum.

Appendix D

Second Bullying Lesson Questionnaire

“Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully”

## Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully

Please answer the following questions as complete and honest as possible.

1. Did you enjoy the story?
2. Which part of the lesson was your favorite?
3. Which part of the lesson was your least favorite?
4. List at least one thing we talked about today that you already knew.
5. List at least one thing you learned from today's lesson.
6. List at least one thing you still would like to learn or a question you have after today's lesson.
7. Name the character you related to the most in the story. Explain how the actions of the small forest animals were similar to how you would have responded to the badger's bullying.



Appendix E  
Third Bullying Lesson Questionnaire  
“Matthew and the Bullies”

## Matthew and the Bullies

Please answer the following questions as complete and honest as possible.

1. Did you enjoy the story?
2. Which part of the lesson was your favorite?
3. Which part of the lesson was your least favorite?
4. List at least one thing discussed today that you already knew.
5. List at least one thing you learned from today's lesson.
6. List at least one thing you still would like to learn or a question you have after today's lesson.
7. Name the character you related to the most in the story.  
Explain how the actions of the character were similar to how you would have responded to the bullying of Matthew.

Appendix F  
Fourth Bullying Lesson Questionnaire  
“My Secret Bully”

## My Secret Bully

Please answer the following questions as complete and honest as possible.

1. Did you enjoy the story?
2. Which part of the lesson was your favorite?
3. Which part of the lesson was your least favorite?
4. List at least one thing discussed today that you already knew.
5. List at least one thing you learned from today's lesson.
6. List at least one thing you still would like to learn or a question you have after today's lesson.
7. Name the character you related to the most in the story.  
Explain how the actions of the character were similar to how you would have responded to the bullying of Monica.