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Increasing Bullying Awareness in Elementary School Special Needs Students

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Running head: Increasing Bullying Awareness in Elementary School Special Needs Students

Increasing Bullying Awareness in Elementary School Special Needs Students'

Maria Olvera

A capstone project for Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

Introduction

I conducted my capstone project at Creekside Elementary School. The form of project I chose to do was a workshop project I conducted in a classroom. The recipients of the workshop were 1st and 2nd grade students with autism. The students were in a special education classroom setting. The student's disabilities were moderate to high functioning. The focal topic of my project was to bring awareness to the students on what bullying is and the importance of reporting it. I explained what it is to be bullied and how to speak to someone if they are being bullied at school. In my workshop I expanded on how bullying is an unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children. Students learned that there are long lasting effects that come from bullying. The reason I chose this project and this specific audience to present to is because, children with autism are more likely to be bullied due to their disabilities. Preliminary research suggests that children with ASD are at greater risk for being bullied than typically developing peers (Carter, 2009). Due to the revealing statistics, sixty percent of students with disabilities report being bullied regularly compared with twenty-five percent of all students. I conducted my project in a special education classroom where awareness on bullying was highly needed.

Needs Statement

Bullying is unwelcome conduct such as verbal abuse, name calling or slurs. Other typical acts of a bully can be threats, physical assault, harming or humiliating. The most commonly used definitions of bullying are repetitive aggressive behaviors including some sort of power imbalance between those involved. A bully can also be a person who does one-time harmful behaviors to another peer despite it not being consecutive. Bullying may be considered harassment when it is based on a student's race, disability, or religion. Among children, power can be attained through advantages in social status or popularity, physical size or strength, age, intellectual ability and membership in a socially defined dominant group (Pepler, 2008). School aged children can employ different forms of bullying for example, verbal and social are the most common. (Scheithauer et al, 2006). Students need to be informed about these matters in order to proceed with communicating to an adult and to be capable of identifying signs of them being bullied.

Bullying can negatively impact a child's access to education and lead to school avoidance, decrease in grades, inability to concentrate and loss of interest in academic achievement. Bullying experiences among children are associated with many negative outcomes. Research in the general population indicates that children who are bullied are more likely to exhibit psychosomatic symptoms, poor social and emotional adjustment, low ratings of school commitment, depressive symptoms, anxiety, and clinically significant social problems, and physical fighting (Delfabbo et al, 2006). Another study on the effects of bullying states that, children with autism are more often victims of bullying than children not on the spectrum . In fact, they exhibit significant risk factors related to their difficulties in socialization and theory of

mind. Moreover, the absence of protective factors such as having friends and supportive peers also contribute to victimization (Alves & Camino, 2015). Children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder have deficits in social interaction and communication, and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interest, or activities. Because of these features they may seem odd, being marginalized and victimized.

Special needs students are two to three times more likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers (Banks, 2009). One study shows that students 5-21 years of age with autism indicate that roughly 65% of the children had been victimized by peers (Carter, 2009). Another study found similar rates among 57 youth diagnosed with high functioning autism (Wainscot et al. 2008). These researchers also found that youth with autism engaged in fewer social interactions at school and reported having fewer friends than their peers. Therefore, it is important for students with disabilities to be able to identify the signs of being bullied since their disabilities make them a hire target. One of the defining characteristics of an autism spectrum disorder is restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interest, and activities.

Students with special needs deal with certain difficulties when facing school and their daily lives. Attending school is already difficult for some students with autism, therefore it is important to speak to them about actions they can take if being bullied. This is important because all students deserve the right to learning in a safe environment. Bringing awareness to special education students should be a higher priority in school due to the higher possibilities they have on becoming victims. Children with autism are increasingly included in general education classrooms in an effort to improve their social involvement. In order to allow students with

autism to build social relationships and feel involved in the classroom we need to have a safe classroom environment. Overall, having a friendly and positive environment in the school would allow all children to indulge with one another allowing bullying to decrease. Awareness in bullying will serve students with autism as a key to be successful in any classroom they enter once they start being mainstreamed.

Students with disabilities are already addressing challenges in the academic environment. When they are bullied, it can directly impact their education. That is why it is important for students to be given the right tools and have role models at school because adult's response is important. Parents, educators and other adults are the most important advocates that a student with disabilities can have. Some students can talk with adults about personal matters and may be willing to discuss bullying. Other students may be reluctant to speak about the situation. There could be several reasons for this, for example the student bullying them may have told them not to tell, or they might fear that if they do tell someone, the bullying won't stop or become worse. Teaching students the steps to take if they are being bullied is important. For example, teaching students self-advocacy skills can help them deal with current challenges and the ones that will arise in the future. Encouraging students to speak up for themselves, how to take responsibility and how to obtain help from grown-ups are all examples that can lead a safe path to fix a bullying situation and ensure the child is safe. In school's parents and teachers need to remember that children are sensitive and reporting an incident is a big deal to them because they may be afraid of "tattling". Educating children with autism on how to deal with a bullying sometimes involves more than telling them to go to an adult. Children who never learn to deal with bullies on their own can fail to develop a healthy sense of independence or self-worth (Cherry, 2015) This is why I present the targeted audience different forms of dealing with bullying by providing

scenarios, reading a book and finishing with an activity of five trustworthy adults they can ask for help.

Theory Application

The theory that influenced my project was Piaget's cognitive development theory. Piaget's theory includes the idea that development comes from challenging what the child previously "knew" about the world. As the child challenges what they learn in each stage, they are able to advance to the next stage, the child learns skills for advanced thinking and reasoning. Piaget believed that development depended primarily on cognitive function. According to the theory, children who are 7 to 11 years old are in the concrete operational stage are able to understand and relate to relational terms. Children have also begun to develop logic and concrete reasoning skills (Guarino, 2019). This is a stage in which a child can perform a variety of mental operations and thoughts using concrete concepts. Concrete reasoning means that children reason best when they have concrete examples and materials to work with.

The age group of my workshop participants were in the concrete operational stage , but children can develop into this stage late due to certain disabilities. The participants in my workshop have developed disabilities due to being on the autism spectrum, like differences in the way their brains develop and process information. As a result, they face significant communication, social, and behavior challenges. Piaget's stages of development are a blueprint that describes the stage of normal intellectual development, from infancy through adulthood. This includes thought, judgement, and knowledge (Shroff, 2017). In a like manner, bullying has been linked to an enormous amount of developmental issues in children. In both in those who have been bullied and those who have bullied others. According to the National Institute of Child

Health and Human Development, bullying has a lifelong impact on the social and emotional development of children that puts them at risk for everything from severe mental health issues to stunted professional growth later in life (Tosalona, 2018). Despite my participants being in the autism spectrum, they were able to fit in the concrete operational stage because I provided step by step materials they could follow along with. As well as answering their questions as we went along the four steps of the presentation. Participants were able to process the information given at the time of the workshop.

Consideration of Diversity

My project addressed a particular form of diversity: Special needs children in elementary school. Special needs students have a unique way of learning and understanding. It is very important to learn about each student and his or her identity in order to adequately include the entire class and promote the students' learning. My project also included students with different cultural backgrounds such as Latino, African American and Caucasian. Most of the students' families come from lower working-class families. My project was created for students with special needs because they are often not included in important school activities like bullying awareness and bullying prevention presentations provided at school. I thought it was extremely important to provide them with the right tools and information on such an important topic that should be constantly covered in elementary school. Special needs students receive less information on this specific matter despite students with disabilities being bullied more often than students with no disabilities. I was influenced to present my workshop to this group because this is a topic that applies to all cultural groups and school aged students'.

Learning Outcomes

I conducted my project at Creekside Elementary School. The project I chose to do was a workshop project, where students in the 1st and 2nd grade were presented with a book and PowerPoint based on bullying at school and what actions they can take to stop a bullying situation. The project had the following learning outcomes.

By the end of the project students will:

1. Know the characteristics of a bully.
2. Identify when they are being bullied.
3. Identify how to speak up to an adult if they are being bullied.

Method

Participants and Location

The participants for my project were students in a special education classroom at Creekside Elementary School in Salinas, California. The total number of students in the special education classroom were twelve students on the Autism Spectrum. The students had mild to moderate disabilities and most of the students were high functioning. The students are in the special day class because they need a more structured environment, however three students from this classroom do get mainstreamed into general education classrooms. The students are in a combined classroom making it first and second grade. The age group is 7-8 years. There were 2 girls and 10 boys in this classroom. The ethnic make-up in the class was 9 Hispanic/ Latino, 2 Caucasian, 1 African American. The Hispanic/Latino students were bilingual in Spanish and English. All the students understood English and spoke it well. The 12 students took part in my

workshop project and were all able to understand the information delivered to them. The students were able to remain engaged and participating through the workshop.

Procedures and Materials

The presentation on bullying was delivered on November 15, 2019. The entire presentation went from 10am to 11:30am. The presentation had four steps: giving a definition of bullying, presenting PowerPoint slides on bullying scenarios, reading a short book on A Bully-Free School and assessing the students' learning after the workshop. The students were sitting down in their assigned seats for the PowerPoint and assessment part of the presentation and for the bully free school book they sat on the carpet area to listen to the book. The students were encouraged to participate in class by giving their own examples of what bullying is and who to tell if they were ever to be bullied.

The materials I used for the presentation were the following, I used the white board in class to write down the definition of a bully. After I provided the students with the definition, I allowed them to include their thoughts on what bullying is. After we covered the first part, I moved on to presenting my PowerPoint that provided the students with bullying scenarios and explained what a friend's actions look like versus a student who bullies. Once the second step was covered, we moved on to the third step which was reading a book to the students on the carpet area of what a bully free school looks like and ways to help friends in school. Once step three was completed I moved on to the end of the presentation. In the last step I provided the students with two worksheets that allowed them to identify if the statements given in the worksheet were a bully or buddy answer. Once the students completed the first worksheet, we moved on to the second and final worksheet which was the helping hand. In this worksheet the students were expected to write five names in each finger/thumb of a trustworthy adults they can

ask for help if being bullied at school. Once they filled out the first part of the hand the second part was to answer the question on the palm of the hand that asked, “What does it mean to be bullied?” Once the four steps of the presentation were completed, we went over the worksheet answers as a class and did a short summary of the workshop.

Results

Learning outcome 1 was that participants would know the characteristics of a bully. I believe this learning outcome was fully met. Participants were able to answer out loud when asked to mention one characteristic they had learned. The main things mentioned out loud by the students were *mean, rude, not friendly and like to fight*. The students were able to correctly identify a buddy or bully on the worksheet provided to them. See figure 1 to view participants answers on the buddy or bully worksheet.

Learning outcome 2 was that participants would identify when they are being bullied. I am convinced that the 12 participants were able to answer a short question about the meaning of being bullied, this outcome was fully met. The question provided to the students was “what does it mean to be bullied?”. See figure 1 for what the students answered.

Learning outcome 3 was that participants would identify who to speak to if they are being bullied. I feel like this learning outcome was fully met. All 12 participants were able to fill in the helping hand with five trustworthy adults they can report a bullying incident to. Refer to figure 1 to view participants answers.

Discussion

I believe this project was successful. The 12 students were able to follow the four steps of my workshop and remained engaged from beginning to end. The students were interested in this

topic and were able to define what bullying was and meant, as well as pointing out which scenarios were actions of a bullying and which scenarios were friendly actions. The materials and steps taken towards the delivery of the presentation were for students to have the ability to identify the characteristics of a bully, identify when they are being bullied, and knowing when to speak up to an adult if they are being bullied. Overall, the students were able to absorb the information presented to them.

In terms of diversity, my project included everyone in a school setting. Bullying can occur to students in or out of a special day classroom. Bullying can also happen between grownups in a different setting like work. I think my project may be applied to everyone.

The limitations of my project were ones I knew I would be presented with because of the group I chose to work with. Before my workshop delivery I knew students would need extra help and the continuous clarification through the presentation. I had to modify the worksheets I passed out the day of my workshop for students to understand them no matter their level of reading or comprehension.

If I had to change the way I delivered my project, I would begin by having a two-day workshop instead of one day. The reason for this is because I would want to provide a pre-assessment to the participants of my project. Providing a pre-assessment would allow me to understand how much the participants know about my topic. Having a pre-assessment in the beginning would also help me see how much the participants learned towards the end of the project. It would also allow me to compare the assessment worksheets from before and after the workshop. Overall, I feel like the participants were able to learn new information and fully understand who to seek help from at school if being bullied and the importance of reporting bullying to an adult.

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Table 1

Participants results of "Buddy or Bully" worksheet

# of students	Worksheet Question	Buddy Answers	Bully Answers
12	Cares about how other people feel	100%	
12	Laughs when other people mess up		100%
12	Takes turns and shares	100%	
12	Plays with everyone	100%	
12	Is kind and respectful	100%	
12	Tries to make others look dumb or not cool		100%
12	Uses polite words	100%	
12	Pushes, hits or punches other people		100%
12	Calls people mean names		100%
12	Helps other people	100%	

Table 2

Participants results for “My helping hand” worksheet

Student Responses	# of students with same answer
Principal	8
Mom	9
Teacher	9
Dad	8
Classroom Paraeducators	6
Grandma	5
Nana	2
Siblings	6
Supervisor	7

Figure 1

Participant worksheet answers

Jacqueline
Buddy or Bully?

Read each statement. If it describes a buddy, color in the happy face. If it describes a bully, color in the sad face.

	Happy	Sad
Cares about how other people feel		
Laughs when other people mess up		
Takes turns and shares		
Plays with everyone		
Is kind and respectful		
Tries to make others look dumb or not cool.		
Uses polite or nice words.		
Pushes, hits or punches other people		
Calls people mean names.		
Helps other people.		

LUKE
Buddy or Bully?

Read each statement. If it describes a buddy, color in the happy face. If it describes a bully, color in the sad face.

	Happy	Sad
Cares about how other people feel		
Laughs when other people mess up		
Takes turns and shares		
Plays with everyone		
Is kind and respectful		
Tries to make others look dumb or not cool.		
Uses polite or nice words.		
Pushes, hits or punches other people		
Calls people mean names.		
Helps other people.		

What does it mean to be bullied? when someone hits you or scores you at school

Supervisor
Teacher
Nana
brother

What does it mean to be bullied? to be told bad names

Mom
Dad
brother





















Appendix A

Buddy/Bully Assessment for Learning outcome 1

Name _____

Buddy or Bully?

Read each statement. If it describes a buddy, color in the happy face. If it describes a bully, color in the sad face.

Cares about how other people feel.		
Laughs when other people mess up.		
Takes turns and shares.		
Plays with everyone.		
Is kind and respectful.		
Tries to make others look dumb or not cool.		
Uses polite or nice words.		
Pushes, hits or punches other people.		
Calls people mean names.		
Helps other people.		

Appendix B

Assessment question for Learning outcome 2: What does it mean to be bullied?

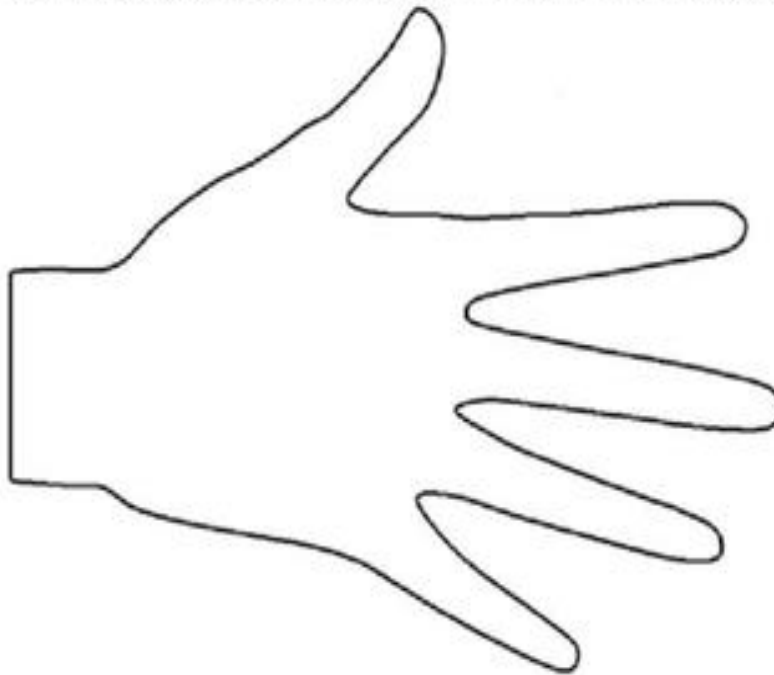
Helping hand for Learning outcome 3

Name: _____ Date: _____

Anti-Bullying Week: My Helping Hand

Write down the names of the 5 people you are choosing to tell if you are being bullied.

Each name should go on a different finger/thumb of the hand.



Appendix C

PowerPoint on Bullying

A Friend IS.....

- Someone you like and who likes you!!
- Someone you can talk to.
- Someone who shares similar interests and goals.
- The most important quality friends have in common is that they care about each other's lives.



The Benefits of Friendship!!!

Friends can:

- Friends can help you **celebrate good times** and **provide support during bad times**.
- Increase your **sense of belonging and purpose**
- Boost your **happiness and reduce your stress**
- Improve your **self-confidence and self-worth**
- Encourage you to **change poor study habits, do your homework, or get more exercise**.



What is Bullying?

Bullying is when someone does something **on purpose to make you feel bad or hurts you and it's hard to make them stop**.



HAVE YOU EVER BULLIED
OR BEEN BULLIED BY SOMEONE?

Different Kinds of Bullying

Bullying can be hitting or pushing, teasing or calling names, taking things without permission, saying things about people behind their back, not letting them play, or sending mean notes, emails or text-messages.

Bullying makes people feel sad, mad, scared, unliked, alone, like they don't want to come to school anymore.



DID YOU KNOW?



A child is bullied every 7 minutes in school...

Bullying Occurrences

- 44 percent said they were called names.
- 43 percent said they were teased.
- 36 percent said a bully spread rumors or lies about them.
- 32 percent said they were pushed or shoved.
- 29 percent said they were hit, slapped, or kicked, threatened.
- 29 percent said they were left out.
- 27 percent said a bully stole their belongings.
- 10 percent said they were bullied online.



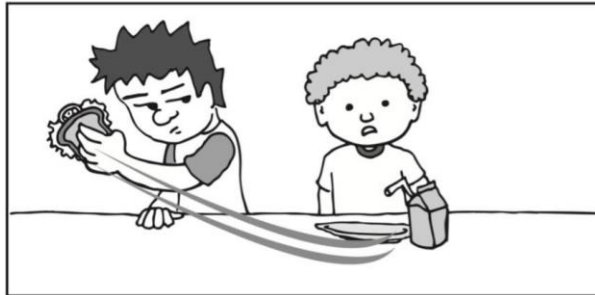
Toll That Bullying Takes

Student who are bullied are more likely to experience **sleep difficulties, anxiety, and depression**. They're also more likely to experience **poor adjustment to school**.

- 19 percent of bullied students say that being bullied has had a **negative effect on how they feel about themselves**.
- 14 percent of students report being bullied has **affected their friendships and relationships with family members and their school work**.
- 9 percent report being bullied has **taken a toll on their physical health**.

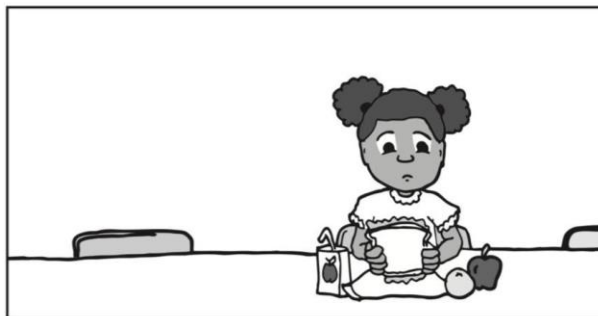


Is It Bullying?



Every day, you see a kid at lunch taking your friend's snack. Your friend is afraid to tell on the kid because your friend is scared.

Is it Bullying?



A new girl in your class is from a different country. Your friends say rude things to her, make fun of her English, and tell her to go back home. Now she sits alone at lunch.

Is It Bullying?



A friend starts teasing you because you have a reading problem. Every time you read aloud, he laughs and makes fun of you.

Is It Bullying?



At the bus stop, some kids have been teasing a boy about how he looks. Now you notice that that boy no longer rides the bus.

What to Do If You're being Bullied

There are things you can do if you are being bullied

- Look at the kid bullying you and tell him or her to stop in a calm, clear voice.
- If speaking up seems too hard or not safe, walk away and stay away.
- Find a trusted adult to stop the bullying on the spot.

There are things you can do to stay safe in the future, too.

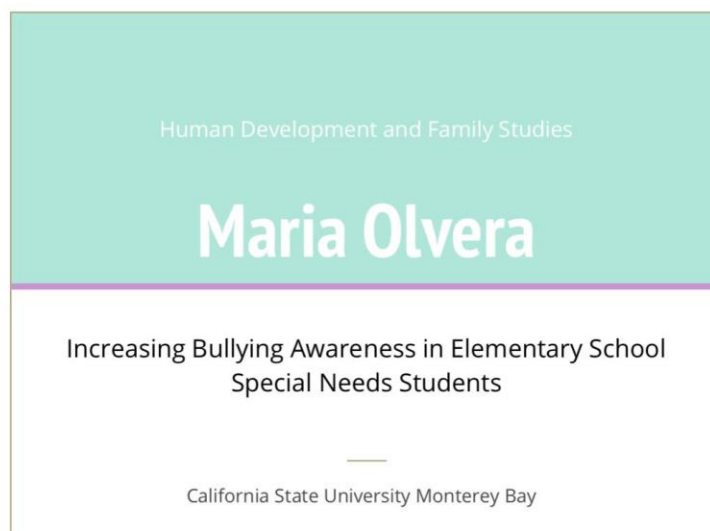
- Talk to an adult you trust. Don't keep your feelings inside. Telling someone can help you feel less alone.
- They can help you make a plan to stop the bullying.
- Stay near adults and other kids. Most bullying happens when adults aren't around.

When you see bullying, there are safe things you can do to make it stop.

- Talk to a parent, teacher, or another adult you trust. Adults need to know when bad things happen so they can help.



Appendix D



The Focus

- Children with Autism are more likely to be bullied due to their disabilities.
- Preliminary research suggest that children with Autism are at greater risk for being bullied than typically developing peers (Carter 2009).
- 60 percent of students with disabilities report being bullied regularly compared with 25 percent of all students.

Needs Statement

- Bullying is unwelcome conduct such as verbal abuse, name calling or slurs.
- Bullying can negatively impact a child's access to education.
- Bullying can also affect a child's behavior and emotions.

Negative effects

- ❖ Research shows that bullying can negatively impact a child's access to education and lead to:
 - ❖ School avoidance and higher rates of absenteeism
 - ❖ Decrease in grades
 - ❖ Inability to concentrate
 - ❖ Loss of interest in academic achievement
 - ❖ Increase in dropouts rates
-

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

- The idea that development comes from challenging what the child previously "knew" about the world.
 - Children have also begun to develop logic and concrete reasoning skills.
-

Piaget's Concrete Operational Stage

- ❖ Children who are 7 to 11 years old are in the concrete operational stage and are able to understand and relate to rational terms.
 - ❖ This is a stage in which a child is capable of performing a variety of mental operations and thoughts using concrete concepts.
 - ❖ Concrete reasoning means that children reason best when they have concrete examples and materials to work with.
-

The Learning Outcomes

- ❖ By the end of the project students will
- ❖ LO 1. Know the characteristics of a bully.
- ❖ LO 2. Identify when they are being bullied.
- ❖ LO 3. Identify how to speak up to an adult if they are being bullied.

Methods

- 12 Special Education Students (Autism)
- 1st and 2nd grade
- Creekside Elementary
- Ethnicity
 - 9 Hispanic/ Latino
 - 2 Caucasian
 - 1 African American



Workshop Day

Delivered workshop by

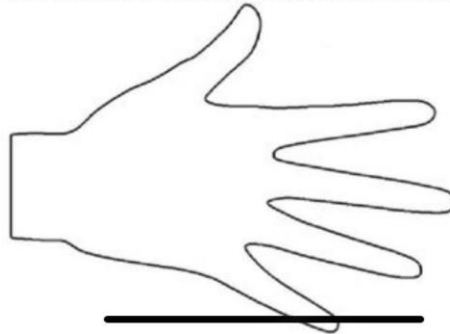
- Giving Bullying definition
 - Provided powerpoint with bullying scenarios
 - Read a short book on *A Bully-Free School*
 - Students were provided with materials after presentation to fill out the **helping hand** and a **Buddy Or Bully** worksheet.
-

Workshop Materials

Name: _____ Date: _____

Anti-Bullying Week: My Helping Hand




















Write down the names of the 5 people you are choosing to tell if you are being bullied.
Each name should go on a different finger/thumb of the hand.

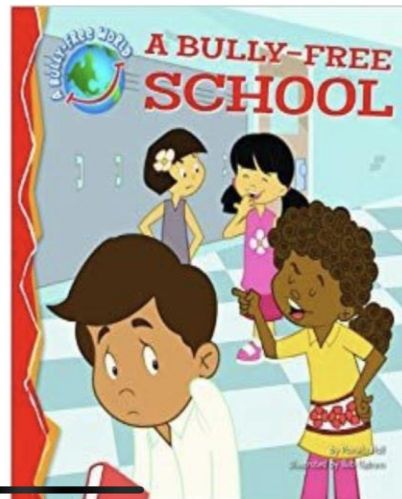


More Materials

Buddy or Bully?

Read each statement. If it describes a buddy, color in the happy face. If it describes a bully, color in the sad face.

Cares about how other people feel.		
Laughs when other people mess up.		
Takes turns and shares.		
Plays with everyone.		
Is kind and respectful.		
Tries to make others look dumb or not cool.		
Uses polite or nice words.		
Pushes, hits or punches other people.		
Calls people mean names.		
Helps other people.		



Results

- ❖ **LO 1.** Students will know the characteristics of a bully.
- ❖ Met
- ❖ Students were able to answer out loud when asked to mention one characteristic they had learned. As well as properly identifying buddy or Bully on the worksheet.

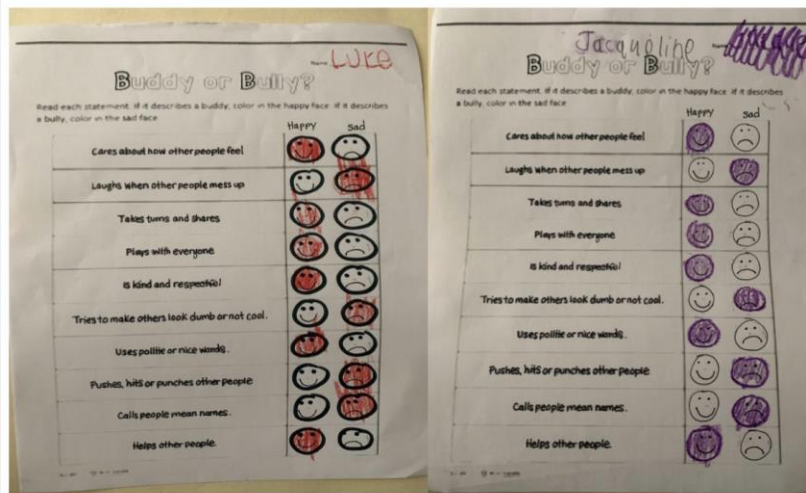
Results

- ❖ **LO 2.** Students will identify when they are being bullied.
 - ❖ Met
 - ❖ The 12 participants were able to answer a short question about the meaning of being bullied.
 - ❖ Question: What does it mean to be bullied?
-

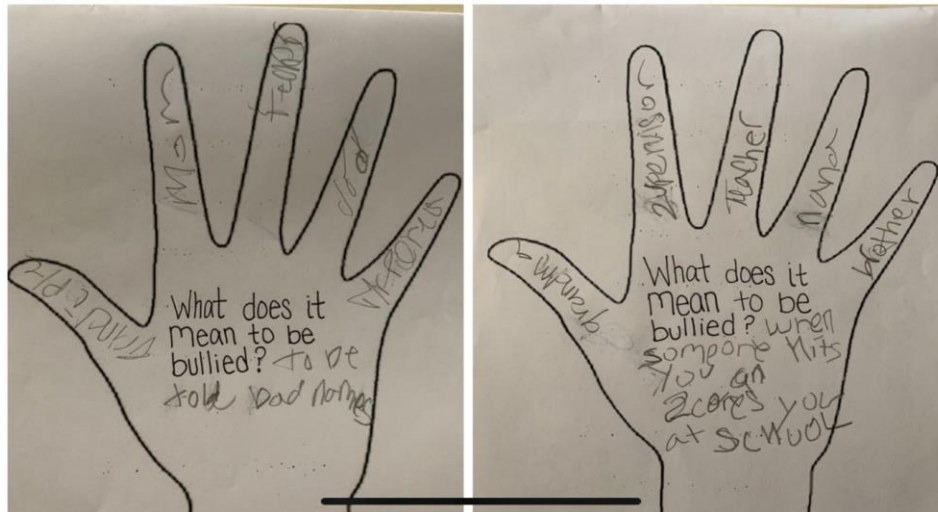
Results

- ❖ **LO 3.** Students will identify who to speak up to if they are being bullied.
 - ❖ Met
 - ❖ All 12 students were able to fill in the helping hand with five trustworthy adults they can report a bullying incident to.
-

Students Assessment



Students Assessment



Discussion

Overall: The workshop was successful, students were able to remain engaged.

Students learned how to identify bullying and adults they could speak to regarding any uncomfortable situation.

Improvements: I would like to conduct a pre assessment.

Human Development and Family Studies

Maria Olvera

Increasing Bullying Awareness in Elementary School
Special Needs Students

Questions?
