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Prevention Program on Decreasing Bullying Behaviors and

Increasing School Connectedness

This work and its defense approved by:

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EFFECTIVENESS OF “DON’T LAUGH AT ME” BULLY PREVENTION PROGRAM
ON DECREASING BULLYING BEHAVIORS
AND INCREASING SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

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by

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Abstract

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS FOR THE MASTER OF EDUCATION DEGREE
IN HEALTH PROMOTION AND EDUCATION, PRESENTED ON AUGUST 2, 2004,
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TITLE: Effectiveness of “Don’t Laugh At Me” Bullying Prevention Program on Bullying Behaviors and School Connectedness

MASTERS COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Dr. Keith King (chair) and Dr. Amy Bernard

Bullying is a violent behavior occurring in US schools. Bullying contributes to a variety of problems for both bullies and victims including decreased self-esteem and decreased academic achievement. In addition, this behavior negatively impacts the overall climate of the school. Research indicates that as many as one in six students in 6th through 10th grade are sometimes bullied while one in twelve are bullied at least once a week. Bullying results from a combination of individual, family, and school factors. Individual factors include impulsive personality and aggressive behavior whereas family factors include lack of parental warmth and involvement. School factors include lack of adult supervision, inconsistent enforcement of rules, and acceptance of bullying promotes bullying by students.

Bullying prevention programs exist to deter bullying while also creating a caring environment for students. Previous research indicates that a whole school approach is the most effective method of reducing bullying. A whole school approach utilizes four main characteristics to decrease bullying behavior. Positive adult roles models, established rules of behavior, non-hostile, non-physical methods of punishment, and supervising areas that are at high-risk for bullying are essential to a successful bullying prevention program.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Don't Laugh at Me bullying prevention program on decreasing bullying behaviors and increasing school connectedness. Results indicated that DLAM is ineffective in decreasing bullying behavior and increasing school connectedness. Specifically, there were no significant differences between experimental group and control group regarding school connectedness, bullying behaviors, importance of reducing bullying behaviors, positive and negative feelings toward class, perceived ability to reduce bullying behaviors, and perceived safety at school.

The results of this study may be used to develop more effective bullying prevention programs. Recommendations for future research as well as future bullying prevention programs are offered. Continuing research regarding bullying prevention and its association to school connectedness could increase the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs.

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Chapter One

The Problem

Unintentional injuries, suicide, and homicide are the first, second, and third leading causes of death among adolescents ages 15-19 (Hoyert, Freedman, Strobino, & Guyer, 1999). In addition, a sizeable percentage of youth in the US are at elevated risk for violence and violent behavior (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002). The Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that one in five (21%) youth carried a weapon to school while one in three (38%) of students reported engaging in a physical fight (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). In 2001, youth under 18 accounted for 15% of violent crime arrests (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2002). The age at which youth initiate risky behaviors is becoming younger, increasing their likelihood for academic failure, school dropout, unemployment, and reduced health status later in life (Stevens & Griffin, 2001).

Bullying is one such violent behavior occurring among youth in the US (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Bullying is defined as the repeated exposure to negative actions by at least one student including physical attacks, verbal attacks, or social isolation (Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999). Although bullying is not limited to the school environment, most bullying occurs on school grounds (Lind & Maxwell, 1996). In fact, almost twice as many students are bullied at school than on their way to or from school (Olweus, 1993). One in six students in 6th through 10th grade state they are sometimes bullied while one in twelve report being bullied at least once per week (Nansel et al., 2001).

Bullying contributes to a wide array of problems for both bullies and victims (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2004). For bullying victims, short-

term effects include decreased self-esteem, physical injury, psychosomatic symptoms such as stomachaches or head aches and decreased academic achievement, while long-term effects include depression and suicide (Hoover & Oliver, 1996, Nansel et al, 2001). Long-term effects on bullies include antisocial and delinquent behavior in adolescence and adulthood including vandalism, shoplifting, and drug use (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Forero, McLellan, Rissel, & Bauman, 1999; Rigby & Cox, 1996). In fact, bullies are four times more likely than non-bullies to be convicted of a crime by age 24 (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2004). Furthermore, bullying affects the overall climate of the school. Students report feeling less safe and less satisfied with school life in schools where bullying occurs (Gilmartin, 1987).

In many cases, bullying results from youth exposure to individual, family, peer, and school risk factors (Crosse, Cantor, Burr et al., 2002). Individual risk factors include a domineering, impulsive personality, positive attitude toward violence, aggressive behavior, difficulty following rules, and declining interest in school (Crosse, Cantor, Burr et al., 2002). Family risk factors include lack of parental warmth and involvement, lack of supervision, overly permissive parenting, and excessively harsh punishment (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2004). Moreover, youth with friends who hold positive attitudes toward violence and are exposed to models of bullying behavior are more likely to become bullies (Crosse, Cantor, Burr et al., 2002). Finally, the school environment can contribute to bullying (Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999). Lack of adult supervision, inconsistent enforcement of rules, and acceptance of bullying promotes bullying by students (Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999).

School prevention programs utilize many methods to deter bullying behavior (Olweus, 1993). Most programs utilize positive adult role models and establish clear rules for behavior (Colvin, Tobin, Beard, Hagan, & Sprague, 1998). Non-hostile, non-physical consequences for unacceptable behavior are also employed in many programs (Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999). In addition, administration and staff can decrease bullying by extending control over bullying areas in the school (Sullivan, 2000). Creating safe, caring environments that prevents bullying while also teaching respect for others is an important step in decreasing bullying (Sullivan, 2000).

Don't Laugh at Me (DLAM) is a character education program focusing on creating positive changes in schools and classrooms (Operation Respect, 2004). DLAM specifically focuses on ridicule, ostracism, disrespect, and bullying while promoting expressions of feelings, cooperation, creative resolution of conflicts, and appreciation of differences. The program utilizes music, video, and classroom activities to create a positive school environment. Finally, DLAM employs intensive training techniques to ensure a successful program implementation.

Statement of the Problem

A comprehensive review of the literature found no published study that had examined the effectiveness of the Don't Laugh at Me program. Therefore, the present study was examined to evaluate the effectiveness of the Don't Laugh at Me bullying prevention program. More specifically, the following research questions were examined:

- 1) What is the effectiveness of DLAM in increasing school connectedness?
- 2) What is the effectiveness of DLAM in decreasing bullying behaviors?
- 3) What is the

effectiveness of DLAM in increasing perceived importance of reducing bullying behaviors? 4) What is the effectiveness of DLAM in increasing positive feelings toward school? 5) What is the effectiveness of DLAM in increasing perceived ability of students to stop bullying behaviors? 6) What is the effectiveness of DLAM in increasing positive student feelings toward class? 7) What is the effectiveness of DLAM in decreasing negative student feelings toward class? 8) What is the effectiveness of DLAM in increasing perceived safety at school?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

Null Hypothesis One: DLAM will have no significant effect on school connectedness.

Predictive Hypothesis One: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest increase in school connectedness than students not receiving DLAM.

Alternative Hypothesis One: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest decrease in school connectedness than students not receiving DLAM.

Null Hypothesis Two: DLAM will have no significant effect on bullying behavior.

Predictive Hypothesis Two: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest increase in the reduction of bullying behavior than students not receiving DLAM.

Alternative Hypothesis Two: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest decrease in the reduction of bullying behavior than students not receiving DLAM.

Null Hypothesis Three: DLAM will have no significant effect on perceived importance of reducing bullying behavior.

Predictive Hypothesis Three: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest increase in perceived importance of reducing bullying behavior than students not receiving DLAM.

Alternative Hypothesis Three: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest decrease in the perceived importance of reducing bullying behavior than students not receiving DLAM.

Null Hypothesis Four: DLAM will have no significant effect on perceived importance of stopping bullying behaviors.

Predictive Hypothesis Four: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest increase in perceived importance of stopping bullying behaviors than students not receiving DLAM.

Alternative Hypothesis Four: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest decrease in perceived importance of stopping bullying behaviors than students not receiving DLAM.

Null Hypothesis Five: DLAM will have no significant effect on positive feelings toward class.

Predictive Hypothesis Five: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest increase in positive feelings toward class than students not receiving DLAM.

Alternative Hypothesis Five: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest decrease in positive feelings toward class than students not receiving DLAM.

Null Hypothesis Six: DLAM will have no significant effect on negative feelings toward class.

Predictive Hypothesis Six: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest increase in negative feelings toward class than students not receiving DLAM.

Alternative Hypothesis Six: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest decrease in negative feelings toward class than students not receiving DLAM.

Null Hypothesis Seven: DLAM will have no significant effect on perceived safety at school.

Predictive Hypothesis Seven: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest increase in perceived safety at school than students not receiving DLAM.

Alternative Hypothesis Seven: Students receiving DLAM will show a significantly greater pretest-posttest decrease in perceived safety at school than students not receiving DLAM.

Delimitations

1. This study was delimited to students in one Midwestern school.
2. This study used a convenience sample, which may not be representative of all students.

Limitations

1. This study was limited by the self-reporting accuracy of the participants.

Assumptions

It was necessary to make certain assumptions during the design and implementation of the study:

1. All participants understood the survey and completed the survey as accurately and honestly as possible.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions were critical to this study:

Bullying- the repeated exposure to negative actions by at least one student including physical attacks, verbal attacks, or social isolation (Olweus, 1999).

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Purpose Statement

A comprehensive review of the literature found no published study, which evaluated the effectiveness of the Don't Laugh at Me (DLAM) program. Therefore, the present study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the DLAM program

Risky Behaviors among Youth

Unintentional injury, suicide, and homicide caused three-fourths of all deaths among US youth serving as the first, second, and third leading causes of death respectively (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). The Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that one in five youth carried a weapon to school (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). Approximately 38% of students reported engaging in a physical fight. Nine percent of youth had attempted suicide whereas 24% seriously considered suicide. In addition, 71% all youth had smoked a cigarette and 1 in 2 reported drinking alcohol. While 80% of youth reported drinking alcohol in their lifetime, almost 1/3 reported heavy drinking (five or more drinks on one occasion). Marijuana use was reported by 42% of youth. Seven percent of survey respondents reported using cocaine during their lifetime.

Youth are also at risk for unsafe sexual behavior. Of all youth surveyed, over half reported engaging in sexual activity (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). More than 3 million youth contracted a sexually transmitted disease (STD) while 1

million unplanned pregnancies occurred in US youth. Not surprisingly, 82% of youth did not use birth control during their last sexual intercourse and 42% did not use a condom.

In the US, over 100,000 students bring a weapon to school each day resulting in over 250,000 weapons on school property each year (Dwyer, Osher & Warger, 1999; Kaufman, Walker, & Sprague, 1997). A vast number of students fear going to school due to victimization or assault occurring while they are at school. Overall, twenty-two percent of students will not use a school bathroom because they are afraid of assault. Students face increasing amounts of teasing, bullying and sexual harassment while at school. In fact, most incidents of physical and emotional violence occur while children are at school (Lind & Maxwell, 1996).

In addition, students threaten over 6,000 teachers and more than 200 teachers are physically injured while on school property (Kaufman et al., 1997). Each year, more than 50% of public school principals report an incident of crime or violence (Snyder, 1998). Of these, 4% of elementary school principals and 19% of middle school principals report at least one incident of serious crime including rape, sexual battery, and physical attacks or robbery with a weapon.

Youth are engaging in risky behaviors at an early age. Increasing numbers of youth nine to twelve are experimenting with chemical substances (Stevens & Griffin, 2001). Over 30% of youth under age thirteen reported consuming at least one drink in their lifetime and 7.6% had tried marijuana (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). Of youth nine to twelve, nine percent are sexually active. Early involvement in risky behavior places youth at risk for poorer outcomes later in life (Stevens & Griffin,

2001). Social development, habitual substance abuse, and unemployment all can be affected by negative behaviors in adolescence.

Furthermore, many behaviors affecting US adults are established in adolescence (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Unintentional and intentional injuries, alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, unsafe sexual behaviors (those leading to STDs and unplanned pregnancy), unhealthy dietary behaviors, and physical inactivity are six behaviors affecting all age groups that may result from adolescence. In order to prevent many adult problem behaviors, it may be necessary to begin prevention programs in childhood. Adults are often unwilling to change behaviors so it is advantageous to prevent them from ever occurring.

Protective Factors for Youth

Reducing risk factors or more importantly, increasing factors that hinder problem behavior are two ways to deter youth from engaging in risky behavior. Factors that inhibit risky behavior are known as protective factors. Protective factors range from asset development to family connectedness to increased knowledge and awareness (Scales, 1997).

Programs that teach children positive coping skills have been found to promote positive decision-making among youth (O'Donnell, 1995). Positive coping skills such as problem-solving skills make it less likely for youth to engage in negative behaviors. Along with coping skills, building developmental assets in youth focuses on 40 assets that promote positive behaviors among youth (Scales & Leffert, 1999). These assets represent opportunities, values, and skills that discourage risky youth behavior and

promote healthful decisions (Scales, 2000). In fact, research indicates that 24 risky behaviors are directly correlated to assets. Children possessing a high number of developmental assets (31-40) are less likely to engage in negative behaviors including alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, suicide, and violence. Conversely, these children are more likely to perform well academically, value diversity, and focus on nutrition and exercise. Despite the fact that developmental assets prevent risky behaviors, many children lack an adequate number of assets. The Search Institute found that the average sixth grader had 21.5 assets (Scales, 2000). Of sixth graders, only 15% had the 31-40 assets necessary to prevent many risky behaviors.

Family, community, and school-based interventions are aimed at reducing risk-taking behavior among youth (Kirby, 2001). Each group may profoundly impact youth development in both positive and negative ways. An increased sense of connection to school, family and peers has been identified as a means of promoting positive youth behavior. It appears that school and family connectedness reduces problem behavior among youth while increasing psychological and physical well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Furthermore, association with peers also increases or decreases problem behavior. A youth is more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as alcohol or drug use, if interaction with peers is negative (Kirby, 2001). Stated again, positive peer interaction leads to decreases in negative youth behavior. Positive peer acceptance assists students in avoiding risky behaviors and improving academic performance (Walters and Bowen, 1997)

Specifically, schools can build developmental assets among students by providing a caring and supportive environment, establishing high expectations, and creating multiple opportunities for participation (Bernard, 1991). Care and support can be devised by creating a nurturing school staff that model positive behaviors to students. Ensuring that everyone is dedicated to fostering the school's overall mission of student growth and development is another way to develop the care and support assets. Similarly, staff members that offer students' support while also serving as mentors tend to contribute to increased student caring and support. Finally, establishing an environment that is warm and responsive to student needs promotes asset development.

Child-social relationship

Supportive social relationships play a significant role in positive development throughout life (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). In children, social relationships serve as protective factors while also safeguarding them from harmful events (Hawkins & Catalano, 1992; Werner & Smith, 1989). Conversely, children who have negative social relationships are at risk for anti-social or delinquent behavior (Resnick, Bearman, Blum & Baumanet, et al., 1997).

School prevention programs attempt to develop students' sense of caring at school. An important factor in child social development is bonding with positive, caring adults (Gregg, 1998). Supportive adults offer children acceptance, model positive behavior, and convey the importance of positive values. Also, child-school attachment is another influential factor in a child's social development. Children who are involved in

school and their own interpersonal development are most likely to feel connected to the school environment (Hawkins, Farrington, & Catalano, 1998).

What is Bullying?

Bullying is defined as “the repeated exposure to negative actions by at least one student including physical attacks, verbal attacks, or social isolation” (Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999). As stated in the definition, bullying can take many forms including physical violence, teasing, name-calling, and exclusion. Two major types of bullying have been identified in the literature. Direct bullying involves an open attack on the victim (Olweus, 1991). Direct bullying may be a physical attack; however, it can also take the form of verbal harassment. Next, indirect bullying consists of social isolation, social exclusion, or non-selection for activities (Olweus, 1991). This form of bullying may be more difficult to recognize than direct bullying.

Although bullying is not limited to the school environment, most bullying occurs on school grounds (Lind & Maxwell, 1996). In reality, almost twice as many students are bullied at school than to and from school (Olweus, 1993). During school hours, 20% of students take precautions against bullying by avoiding certain locations within school. As many as 22% avoid areas on school grounds, and 8% stay away from school-related events due to bullying (Johnson, O'Malley, & Bachman, 1993).

Overall, the highest rates of bullying and bully victims are found in elementary schools (Pelligrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 2001). In elementary school, the rates of victimization are estimated at 19% while rates of bullying are approximately 14% (Pelligrini et al., 2001). The youngest students within a school are most likely to be

victimized by bullies (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Younger students are bullied not only by peers but also by older students in the school.

Over time, physical bullying decreases as age and grade level increases (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988). However, studies indicate that verbal bullying remains constant (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Perry et al., 1988). In middle schools, more than one in six students in 6th through 10th grade say they are sometimes bullied while one in twelve report being bullied at least once per week (Nansel et al., 2001). The prevalence of bullying in middle schools is also lower than rates of victimization (Dake, Price, & Tellijschmann, 2003). European studies have found the prevalence of bullying to be as low as 5% and as high as 14% in middle schools (Baldry & Farrington, 1999; Menesini, Eslea, & Smith, 1997).

In general, boys are more likely than girls to bully and be bullied. On average, boys are more likely than girls to be involved in physical bullying; boys are three to four times more likely than girl bullies to physically assault their victims (Baldry & Farrington, 1999; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993; Salmon & Smith, 1998; Whitney & Smith, 1993). However, girls are as likely as boys to be involved in verbal bullying (Baldry & Farrington, 1999; Nansel et al., 2001). Girls are also more likely to bully through ridiculing and teasing while boys use more direct, physical methods to bully. In general, girls are bullied by both girls and boys while boys are bullied by other boys (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Whitney & Smith, 1993). About 65% of bullying is carried out by boys, 15% by girls, and 19% by both boys and girls. In addition, in grades 5-7, more than 60% of girls were bullied by boys only whereas an additional 15-20%

were bullied by boys and girls (Olweus, 1991). More than 80% of male victims are bullied by boys.

Risk Factors for Bullying

Youth are at increased risk for bullying behavior if they possess certain risk factors. Risk factors fall into four categories including individual, familial, peer/social, and school/environmental factors (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2004). First, youth usually hold certain characteristics that make them more likely to bully peers. Such characteristics include impulsive, dominant personality, physical aggression, positive attitudes toward violence, decreased interest in school or academic achievement, and difficulty following rules. Second, familial factors place youth at increased risk. Lack of parental supervision and authoritarian parenting are associated with bullying. Third, the peer and social environment also contribute to bullying behavior. Peers who accept violent and aggressive behavior are likely to be involved with friends who bully. In addition, exposure to bullying, specifically by peers, older students, and siblings, tends to increase the risk for bullying. Finally, the school environment plays a significant role in bullying (Olweus, 1993). Lack of supervision, inconsistent enforcement of rules, and teacher and student acceptance of bullying correspond to increases in bullying behavior.

Risk Factors for Bullying Victims

Similarly to bullies, victims are also at risk depending on certain characteristics. Often, victims lack assertiveness skills and are sensitive or insecure (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2004). Moreover, over-protective parents may possibly lead

to victimization. Lack of close friends can contribute to children becoming victimized. Again, youth are at risk for bullying in schools that accept bullying, do not enforce school rules, and do not supervise especially during breaks. Interestingly, Olweus (1978), a leading researcher in bullying, found that most physical characteristics, such as obesity and hygiene, were not related to victimization. In Olweus' research, only physical size was a factor in victimization. Smaller and weaker children were at risk for victimization.

Effects of Bullying on Bullies

Bullies also suffer from long-term effects as a result of their behavior. Compared to non-bullies, bullies are two to four times more likely to suffer from depressive symptoms (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela & Rantanen, 1999; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen & Rimpela, 2000; Salmon & Smith, 1998). Bullies are also four times more likely to report suicidal ideation (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999).

Bullying may be indicative of other problem behaviors. From adolescence to adulthood, bullies are more likely than non-bullies to engage in problem behaviors including alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, truancy, vandalism, and law-breaking (Dake et al., 2003). In fact, bullies are four times as likely as non-bullies to be convicted of a crime by age 24 (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2004). Finally, research indicates that bullying, specifically physical bullying, is a risk factor for violence among 15-25 year olds.

Effects of Bullying on Victims

Bully victims suffer from both short-term and long-term health effects. In the short-term, victims are often unhappy, upset, and anxious due to the bullying. Victims of bullying suffer from anxiety at a rate three-four times greater than non-bullied youth (Salmon & Smith, 1998). Victims suffer from low self-esteem, may develop stomach or headaches, and report feelings of loneliness at school (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2004; Nansel et al, 2001; O'Moore, & Kirkham, 2001). In both the short-term and long-term, victims can become depressed and suicidal. In fact, victims of bullying are 4 times more likely to report depressive symptoms than youth not involved in bullying behavior (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000). Victims are also twice as likely to have suicidal thoughts (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999). Long-term effects also include depression and low self-esteem even years after the bullying has ended.

Effects of Bullying on Bully-Victims

Children who are both bullies and bully victims are at greatest risk for mental health problems. Bully-victims are six to eight times more likely than children not involved in bullying behavior to suffer from depressive symptoms (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000). Bully-victims are also 2.5 times more likely to report suicidal ideation (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999). Bully-victims also suffer from anxiety more than children not involved in bullying. Bully-victims are six times more likely to have anxiety (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000).

Peer Involvement in Bullying

Overall, students who are rated as popular by their peers are less likely to be bullied than students who are not ranked as popular in school (Mynard & Joseph, 1997). Interestingly, bullies are ranked as popular as students not involved in bullying. While victims of bullying struggle with popularity, students who are bully/victims are at greatest risk for unpopularity than all students.

In elementary school, peers play a significant role in bullying by contributing to the behavior and encouraging the bully to continue (Craig & Pepler, 1997). One study found that peers engaged in 85% of bullying incidents (Craig & Pepler, 1997). Interestingly, research indicates that peer roles in bullying depend largely on social status.

Peers who contribute to bullying hold roles known as participant roles (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukianinen, 1996). In the participant role, children reinforce the bullying behavior by laughing, watching, and taking sides. Overall, male peers are more likely than girls to reinforce the bullying behavior and assist the bully in victimization. Female peers are more likely than boys to intervene to stop the bullying.

In general, students hold negative views of bullies while they are sympathetic toward bullying victims (Boulton, 1997; Menesini, et al., 1997). However, peers may positively rate individual students even if they are bullies (Mynard & Joseph, 1997). This suggests that students are opposed to bullies as an idea, but may perceive an individual bully positively. Finally, one study of small-town Midwestern schools revealed that

students believed that victims bring bullying on themselves and that bullying makes them stronger (Oliver, Hoover, & Hazler, 1994).

Bullying and At-Risk Behaviors

Studies have found a relationship between bullying and problem behaviors. Problem behaviors include substance abuse, fighting, carrying weapons, and cheating. Research indicates that there is a significant relationship between bullying and carrying weapons, cheating, skipping school, and law-breaking behaviors such as stealing and vandalism (Dake et al., 2003). Overall, bullies are significantly more likely than non-bullies to become involved in alcohol and tobacco use and fighting as adolescents.

In addition, bullying has been linked to difficulties in future relationships (Connolly, Pepler, Craig, & Taradash, 2000). One study found that bullies begin dating at a younger age than non-bullying peers and were also involved in more intense dating relationships (Connolly et al., 2000). Even though the relationship was characterized as more intense, bullies reported that these relationships were less emotionally supportive. Bullies also reported physical and social aggression toward their dating partners (Connolly et al., 2000).

Bullying and Violence

In recent years, bullying has attracted much attention due to extreme violence that has seemed to result from school bullying. Investigations into school shootings reveal that two-thirds of school shooters had been bullied, threatened, and attack by peers (US

Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center, 2000). Although extreme violence is rare, lesser incidents of violent behavior is related to bullying in the classroom.

Bullying is one of many antisocial behaviors associated with an increased risk of adolescent aggression and violence (Hawkins, Herrenkol & Farrington, 1998). Karcher (2002) found that rural middle school students were less likely to commit acts of violence if students reported a sense of connectedness to teachers and school. Feelings of connectedness to the school environment has been found to prevent many acts of youth violence (Edwards, 2001). However, many schools are now promoting zero-tolerance policies that ultimately encourage youth violence through isolation of students (Mulvey & Cauffman, 2001). In the school environment, teachers may prevent violence in students by promoting a safe, caring atmosphere for students.

Although youth violence is decreasing in the US, youth are still at-risk for engaging in violent behavior. Many factors influence violent behavior among US youth. Specifically, peer pressure, need for attention and respect, feelings of low self-worth, early childhood abuse or neglect, witnessing violence at home, in the community, or in the media, and easy access to weapons are all associated with increases in youth violence (American Psychological Association, 2003). Association with deviant, or negative, peer groups also influence youth violence. Behavioral factors associated with youth violence include lack of school readiness, antisocial attitudes, high levels of aggression, and rejection by peers and teachers. Although many factors play a role in youth violence, many steps can be taken to decrease violence and promote positive behavior among youth.

Violent behavior among students is perpetuated by the climate of the school itself. Factors such as school design, overcrowding, lack of caring but firm disciplinary procedures, lack of cultural sensitivity, student alienation, rejection of at-risk students by peers and teachers, and student anger toward school routine and demand for conformity all contribute to violent behavior including bullying (Wise, 1999). Conversely, factors that decrease violence among students include a positive school atmosphere, high performance expectations for all students, inclusionary values, strength of student attachment to the school, opportunities for skill-building and high levels of student and parent participation at school. Focusing on these characteristics, schools can make a huge impact on student behavior. Students who feel cared for at school are less likely to engage in violent behavior and more likely to make positive behavior choices.

Along with academic skills, schools foster social and emotional development in students. Teachers, administrators and staff need to work together to build a positive, non-violent climate for students where social, emotional, and academic learning can thrive. Emphasizing the development of life skills, coping skills, prosocial development will contribute to positive student development. In addition, teaching children how to behave while demonstrating alternative ways to deal with problems can decrease violent behavior (Elias, 1998). Many schools outline negative behaviors in a disciplinary handbook, but most fail to outline positive behavior expectations for their students (Sprague, Sugai, & Hill 1998). Promoting positive behaviors encourages students to avoid negative behaviors. It also teaches students alternatives to negative and violent behaviors. Promoting this type of environment takes a collaborative effort by everyone in the school.

Researchers have established six steps that schools can take to encourage positive behavior and reduce violence (Sprague et al., 1998). Creating a purpose statement concerning teaching and learning at the school defines what the school is about. Establishing clear expectations of both positive and negative behavior for students contributes to positive student behavior. Creating a set of teaching standards that convey these expectations will ensure they are taught throughout the school. Overall, staff should encourage students throughout the school to live by these expectations. Finally, school administration needs to develop a system to deal with student violations of school rules. Schools are also encouraged to monitor their plans and evaluate them for effectiveness.

School administrators play an important role in promoting a nonviolent school culture in which all students feel cared for and respected (Elias, 1998). Administrators who regularly examine the school environment can identify any problem areas and implement the appropriate programs. Working to establish a positive environment throughout the school set the tone for a non-violent atmosphere.

In the classroom, teachers can implement many policies and procedures to reduce student violence. First, teachers need to recognize warning signs of violent behavior (Safe Youth Foundation, 2003). Recognizing warning signs is essential to preventing violent behavior from occurring. Teachers also need to report any threats from a student immediately. Involving families, setting high standards for students, and incorporating discussion on violence and violence prevention all contribute to positive student development while also establishing a positive, caring environment for students.

Academic Concerns of Bullying

In the school setting, academic achievement is affected by bullying behavior. Although studies are inconsistent, there is a consensus that a relationship exists between academics and bullying (Dake et al., 2003). US and British studies have found a significant relationship between academic achievement and victimization and bullying (Mynard & Joseph, 1997; Schwartz, Dodge, & Coie, 1993). Overall, victims had lower academic competence than bullies. Similarly, in a study of bully victims, middle school students had lower GPA's if they were bullied (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000). Finally, Nansel (2001) et al found bullies were almost two times more likely to be below average students.

Consequences of Bullying on Overall School Environment

Overall, the school environment suffers when bullying is a prevalent behavior among students. In schools with bully problems, students report lower rates of school satisfaction. In fact, students who are continuously victimized by even mild forms of bullying are more likely than non-victims to be unhappy at school (Gilmartin, 1987). Students also report feeling less safe at school. In the school environment, bullying establishes an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Over time, students may consider bullying an acceptable behavior and may begin to bully themselves.

Bullying impacts other school issues such as school adjustment or school bonding. School adjustment relates to a student's ability to follow rules, do homework, and generally function at school (Haynie, Nansel, & Eitel, 2001). School bonding is a

student's desire to perform well academically and be happy at school (Haynie et al., 2001). Bullies were significantly less likely than non-bullies to report high levels of school adjustment and bonding. Bully/victims reported the lowest levels of school adjustment and bonding.

Elementary to Middle School Transition

One study found increases in bullying among sixth graders (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2001). Elementary to middle school transition may increase bullying behaviors. Researchers speculate that this increase is due to the stress of a new environment, desire to fit in with peers, or reflects the new school climate. According to a recent study, bullying enhanced popularity and status of students in their first year of middle school. In addition, in one study, middle school teachers rated 13.1% of male students as both aggressive and popular (Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl, & Van Acker, 2000).

Principles of Bully Prevention

To prevent bullying behavior, certain principles must be followed. Raising overall awareness regarding bullying is a first step in decreasing the problem (Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999). Once awareness is raised, adult involvement in decreasing bullying is imperative. Adults should provide support for all children and try to protect them from bullying. Next, clear rules against bullying curb the behavior. Establishing social norms against it also contributes to decreases.

One essential factor in bully prevention is positive adult involvement (Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999). As aforementioned, adults play important roles in shaping

youth behaviors. Adults who are warm and caring toward youth have a positive impact on their behavior. Parents, teachers, and school staff can serve as role models while also discouraging bully behavior.

Bullying is most likely to occur in schools that possess certain characteristics. Schools with inadequate adult supervision during breaks, such as lunch or between classes, have higher rates of bullying (Sullivan, 2000). By extending control over high-risk areas of the school environment, administration and staff can create a safer, bully-free environment. Also, schools that have teachers and students who accept bullying behavior or who are indifferent to bullying have high rates of bullying. Finally, schools that do not enforce rules against bullying suffer high rates of bullying.

Teachers' Role in Bully Prevention

Teachers' perceptions of bullying in the classroom have a significant impact on preventing and dealing with bullying behavior. Overall, teachers perceive bullying as a serious behavior concern, second only to student drug use (Borg, 1998). However, in one study, 25% of teachers believed it is sometimes effective to ignore the bullying (Stephenson & Smith, 1988). Oftentimes, teachers regard some forms of bullying, including verbal attacks, isolation, and exclusion, as less serious than physical bullying (Boulton, 1997; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001; Stephenson & Smith, 1988). With physical bullying, the damage may be easily visible in the form of an injury whereas the harm from verbal bullying or exclusion is less noticeable. Teachers are also often unaware of the extent of bullying. A Canadian study found that 85% of teachers reported intervening often or nearly always to stop bullying; however, only 35% of

students in the same school reported teacher intervention in bullying episodes (Pepler, Craig, Ziegler, & Charach, 1994).

In addition, teacher interventions often focus on the bully instead of the victim. Student victims report that teachers and school staff fail to protect them from bullying (Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, 1992). Victims also report that schools are ineffective in dealing with bullies themselves. Many times, students do not report bullying because they are afraid of retaliation (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). If schools were more effective in dealing with bullying, more students may come forward to report bullying.

Teachers hold negative views of bullies while they are sympathetic to bully victims (Boulton, 1997). Teachers who have taught for the greatest length of time were less sympathetic toward victims and held more negative attitudes toward them. Overall, over 98% of teachers felt responsible for preventing bullying, but teachers are not confident in their ability to prevent it. Finally, 87% of teachers wanted additional training in bullying prevention.

Positive student relationships with teachers are one important aspect of bully prevention. Student-teacher relationships are imperative to social, emotional, and academic development among youth (Murray & Greenburg, 2001). Feelings of support and attachment to teachers are significantly related to student motivation and engagement in school (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). In a study of eight through twelve year olds, researchers found that attachment to teachers is related to motivation as well as behavioral and emotional engagement in school (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Students who reported positive relationships with their teachers were actively involved at school, perform well academically, and had fewer behavior problems. In a similar study of

kindergartners, students who felt more warmth and openness with teachers displayed better peer social skills, frustration tolerance, and work habits one year later than students with poor teacher relationships (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). This indicates that student-teacher relationships may be influential to student behavior and motivation from kindergarten through adolescence.

Teachers are in a position to directly affect the behaviors of students. Since teachers interact daily with students, they have great control over the learning environment as well as the level of student-teacher interaction. Studies indicate that certain classroom management and teaching practices increase academic achievement and attachment to teachers and school (Hawkins & Lam, 1987). As previously stated, increased academic achievement and high levels of school connectedness prevent youth engagement in risky behavior. Evaluators of the Child Development Project found teacher support may serve as an essential protective factor for at risk students (Battistich, Schaps, Watson & Solomon, 1996). In this study, teacher support was found to decrease alcohol and drug use as well as delinquent behavior.

Certain teaching techniques may be beneficial in preventing antisocial behavior among youth. Specifically, classroom management practices that establish high expectations for students result in lower negative school behavior, including school crime and delinquency (Gottfredson, 1987). Classroom management affects quality of the learning environment, quality of instruction, student-teacher interaction as well as student development of social and communication skills (Hester, 2002). Positive classroom management engages students in positive contact with others while supporting development of communication skills.

In addition, research indicates cooperative learning and shared decision-making may decrease rates of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use as well as delinquent behavior (Gottfredson, 1987). Cooperative learning encourages students to interact together in small groups thereby reducing competition and individual class activities (Emmer & Gerwels, 2002). This technique allows children to practice communication skills while facilitating decision-making. Research suggests that cooperative learning leads to higher self-esteem, increases in positive peer interaction, more involvement in classroom activities, improved attitude toward academics, and positive associations between motivation and achievement (Daniels, 1994; Lazarowitz, Baird, & Bowlden, 1996; Lazarowitz, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Baird, 1994). This type of teaching has also resulted in greater student attachment to both the teacher and the school. Cooperative learning techniques allow students to work together to facilitate learning. Students who work together often provide aid group members in the classroom and demonstrate greater commitment to peers (Gilles & Ashman, 1998). Similarly, students who perceive prosocial opportunities, such as positive peer interaction, report increases in school connectedness (McBride, Curry & Cheadle, 1995). Teachers have the ability to positively connect students to school through prosocial activities.

Teachers can create a caring environment for students that support positive behavior choices (Kerr & Nelson, 1999). Consistent and structured classrooms allow children to learn both academic and nonacademic skills. Research indicates that defining positive and negative behavioral consequences and following through communicates to students what is expected of them in the classroom. Specific school and classroom rules against bully can deter the behavior. Furthermore, feelings of safety in school as well as

feelings of connectedness to school and teachers were associated with positive social, emotional, and school-related adjustment (Murray & Greenberg, 2001). Students who feel supported at school are less likely to be involved in delinquent behavior and less likely to associate with negative peer groups. Students who are dissatisfied with their teachers showed significantly more delinquent behavior among their friends than students who were satisfied with their teachers. These students also reported more feelings of depression, anxiety, and conduct problems.

Utilizing the school environment, teachers can create a caring community in which all students are accepted. Students who feel accepted are more likely to report feelings of connectedness to the school (Dekovic, 1999).

Schools' Role in Bully Prevention

As aforementioned, students engage in physical fighting at school, carry weapons onto school property, and bully peers. At school, a multidimensional approach to bully prevention has shown to be effective in reducing bullying (Dake et al., 2003). Successful bully prevention programs incorporate aspects such as assessment of the bullying problem, school conference days, increased adult supervision of high-risk areas, parent-teacher meetings, and classroom rules against bullying (Olweus, 1993). Other effective tools include meetings between the bully and the victims and encouraging parents of the bully and victim to meet.

Overall, schools that take deliberate steps to decrease bullying can reduce bullying behavior by 50% (Olweus, 1993). To decrease bullying behavior, schools need to send strong messages that bullying will not be tolerated. It is imperative for schools to

promote the idea that adults will be supportive of bully victims and that the school will provide a safe environment for all students (Batsche & Knoff, 1994).

Schools are an ideal environment for teaching students nonviolent approaches to address conflicts. Conflict resolution skills may reduce bullying by giving youth options when addressing conflicts. Changes in school routines can reinforce classroom and program concepts while promoting prosocial norms (Embry, Flannery, Vazonyi et al, 1996). In addition, adults at school serve as important role models. Students model the prosocial behaviors of school staff (Farrell, Valois, & Meyer, 2002; Meyer & Farrell, 1998).

One particularly important time period is the elementary to middle school transition. At this time, positive social relationships are imperative for student well-being and development. Protective factors such as strong social supports, trusting relationships with adults, and participation in decision-making can impact student behavior (Eccles, Lord, Roeser, Barber & Jozefowicz, 1997; Elias, Gara, & Ubriaco, 1985; Fenzel, 2000). School prevention programs attempt to develop students' sense of caring at school. An important factor in child social development is bonding with positive, caring adults (Gregg, 1998). Adults such as these offer children acceptance and support, model positive behavior, and convey the importance of positive values. Also, child-school attachment is another influential factor in a child's social development. Children who are involved in school and their own interpersonal development are most likely to feel connected to the school environment. (Hawkins, Farrington, & Catalano, 1998).

Research indicates there is some benefit to training students in social skills and problem solving. Students who have these skills show less conflict, aggression, and

violence than students who are not trained in these skills (Elias et al., 1985; Farrell et al., 2002). Furthermore, schools can emphasize constructive discipline, effective classroom management, and peaceful resolution of problems and tolerance (Farrell et al., 2002). These strategies can result in decreased antisocial behaviors as well as an overall positive school climate.

Don't Laugh at Me

Don't Laugh at Me is a bully prevention and character education program aimed at children in elementary and middle schools (Operation Respect, 2004). The project resulted from a collaboration of organizations including Educators for Social Responsibility, Southern Poverty Law Center, the McGraw-Hill Companies, and the Character Education Partnership. The overarching objective of the program is to create caring classrooms and a positive school climate. Specifically, focusing on ridicule, disrespect, and bullying, the program hopes to build cooperation, sharing of feelings, conflict resolution, and respect and appreciation of differences among students. To achieve this goal, the program utilizes music, videos, and classroom activities.

One essential feature of the program is an intensive training program. The goal of the training program is to equip teachers and other school personnel with the skill and confidence to launch the program. Through intensive training, the program hopes to ensure a successful implementation. In training, educators learn to connect to themselves and each other, build skills, and explore feelings. In this way, educators are invested in the program and empowered by the training, which they can carry back to their classrooms.

Don't Laugh at Me is designed to help teachers and students create a respectful, compassionate, and ridicule-free environment. In this environment, students' social, emotional, and academic well-being can thrive. Students and teachers alike are targeted to learn and grow from the experiences of Don't Laugh at Me.

Chapter 3

Methods

Purpose Statement

A comprehensive review of the literature found no published study, which addressed the effectiveness of Don't Laugh at Me, a bully prevention program. Therefore, the present study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of Don't Laugh at Me as a bully prevention program. This chapter will also address the following: participants, instrument development, instrument testing, procedures, and data analysis.

Program Description

Don't Laugh at Me (DLAM) is a character education program focusing on creating positive changes in schools and classrooms (Operation Respect, 2004). A group of organizations including Educators for Social Responsibility, Southern Poverty Law Center, the McGraw-Hill Companies, and the Character Education Partnership developed the Don't Laugh at Me program. Specifically, DLAM focuses on ridicule, ostracism, disrespect, and bullying while promoting expression of feelings, cooperation, creative resolution of conflicts, and appreciation of differences. The overarching goal of the DLAM program is to create a classroom characterized by a healthy expression of feelings, caring, compassion, and cooperation, the creative resolution of conflicts, and an appreciation of differences.

To accomplish this goal, the program utilizes music, video, and classroom activities to create a positive school environment. The activities build skills, raise awareness, explore

feelings, and connect students to their inner selves. Furthermore, DLAM employs intensive training techniques to ensure a successful program implementation. Teachers are provided with important tools to empower students while acting as effective change agents in the classroom and school. Grades 2-5 and 6-8 are targeted via two separate, age-appropriate curricula.

Participants

The participants of the present study were current students in grades 1 through 6 in a Summit County elementary school. A total of 1032 students participated in the survey. Of participants, 50% of students completed the Don't Laugh at Me program from February to May 2004.

Instrument Development

An extensive review of the literature was conducted to examine bullying and bully prevention programs. Databases utilized during this literature review were Academic Search Premiere, CINHALL, Education Abstracts, and ERIC. Search terms included bullying, bully prevention, bully intervention, and bully programs. Next, a three-page, 23 item survey was developed by Metis Associates, a research and consulting group, to evaluate the effectiveness of the DLAM program. This survey was also utilized to examine the research questions.

The instrument consisted of eight subscales and a demographic section. Student feelings toward school subscale consisted of two items, which required students to

respond using a five-point Likert-type scale (e.g., 1 = I like it a lot, 5 = I don't like it at all). Six items comprised overall feelings in current class subscale and required students to respond using a three-point Likert-type scale (1 = A lot of the time, 5 = Never or almost never). The next subscale consisted of four items and examined student behaviors in the current class. Students answered these questions by responding to a three-point Likert-type scale (1 = Not very much, 3 = A lot). Two items assessed self-behaviors in current class and required students to respond using a three-point Likert-type scale (1 = Never or almost never, 3 = A lot). One item each assessed student perceptions of safety (1 = Not safe, 3 = Very safe), perceived importance in preventing bullying (1 = Not important, 3 = Very important), and perceived possibility in preventing bullying (1 = No, it can't be stopped, 5 = Yes, stop it completely). Finally, two items also using a three-point Likert-type scale assessed students' feelings upon completion of the survey.

The demographic component required students to provide demographic information for two items. The demographic items assessed included gender and current grade level.

Instrument Testing

Stability reliability of the survey was established using test-retest procedures using a convenience sample of 20 fourth grade students. Pearson r correlations yielded .401. The period of time between testing was seven days.

Table 1. Stability Reliability of DLAM Survey Instrument

Subscale	Number of Items	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
School Connectedness	Two	.235
Bullying Behaviors	Three	.403
Overall Feelings in Current Class	Six	.454
Student Behaviors in Current Class	Six	.440
Self Behaviors in Current Class	Five	.208
Perceived Safety at School	Three	.486
Perceived Importance of Stopping Bullying Behavior	Six	.393
Perceived Possibility of Stopping Bullying Behavior	Six	.219
Students' Feelings after Completing Survey	Six	.426

N= 20

To establish content validity, the survey was distributed to a panel of experts.

Panel experts included two health education professors with expertise in survey research.

The panel was instructed to complete the survey and make suggestions regarding the instrument and its scoring scale. Recommendations from the experts were incorporated into the final instrument.

Procedures

The pretest survey was then administered in February 2004 to all first through sixth grade students at two elementary schools. Teachers were instructed to distribute pretest and posttest surveys in their classes. The survey items and instructions were read verbatim to increase internal validity of the evaluation by minimizing potential difficulties from student reading abilities.

DLAM program consists of one hour of instruction per week. The principles of DLAM are also incorporated into other areas of the curriculum. The DLAM program began the first week of February 2004 and ended the last week of May 2004. In May

2004, all first through sixth grade students completed another survey (the same instrument as the pretest) according to the same pretest administration procedures.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Multivariate analyses of variance were conducted to examine whether DLAM increased students' feelings of school connectedness and decreased bullying behavior based on gender and grade level. Univariate F-tests will be computed to determine specific subscale items that were significant. All data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 10.1.4 for Windows. An alpha level of .05 was utilized for all data analyses.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion

DLAM is a character education program focusing on creating positive changes in schools and classrooms (Operation Respect, 2004). DLAM specifically focuses on ridicule, ostracism, disrespect, and bullying while promoting expression of feelings, cooperation, creative resolution of conflicts, and appreciation of differences. A comprehensive review of the literature found no published study, which examined the effectiveness of the DLAM program. Specifically, purpose of the present study was to evaluate the effectiveness of DLAM bullying prevention program.

Chapter one addresses the problem, purpose, research questions, hypotheses, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and operational definitions. Chapter two reviews the professional literature regarding bully prevention programs, specifically among elementary and middle school students. Chapter three discusses the participants, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis in the present study. Chapter four addresses the results of this study.

Response Rate

Survey instruments were distributed in class to first through sixth grade students (N = 542) at two midwestern elementary schools. A total of 1048 surveys were completed, resulting in an overall response rate of 100% (1048/1048). All of the returned surveys were included in the final data analysis.

Demographic Characteristics

There was an even distribution between the experimental group (48.2%) and the control group (51.7%). Of respondents, 53.0% were male and 46.7% were female. There was an even distribution for grade level. First grade comprised 15.8% of the sample, 12.6% were second graders, 16.9% were third graders, 18.7% were fourth graders, 18.2% were fifth graders, and 17.6% were sixth graders.

Table 4.1. Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Number	Valid Percent
School		
Ottoville (Experimental Group)	506	48.2
Kalida (Control Group)	542	51.7
Gender		
Male	556	53.0
Female	490	46.7
Grade Level		
1 st	166	15.8
2 nd	133	12.6
3 rd	176	16.9
4 th	197	18.7
5 th	191	18.2
6 th	185	17.6

N=1048; Missing values excluded from analyses

School Connectedness

From pretest to posttest, results indicate that students from the experimental group ($M=3.88$, $SD=.991$) and control group ($M=3.90$, $SD=.982$) reporting liking their school. When coming to school, students from the experimental group ($M=3.67$, $SD=.927$) and control group ($M=3.63$, $SD=.967$) report feeling happy.

Table 4.2 School Connectedness

Item	Pretest	Posttest	F-value	Significance
Feelings about school				
Experimental Group	3.89	3.86	.180	NS
Control Group	3.91	3.88		
Feelings coming to school				
Experimental Group	3.69	3.62		
Control Group	3.62	3.64		

N = 542; Missing values excluded from analyses. Means based on a 5 point scale (5=I like it a lot; 4=I like it; 3=OK; 2=I don't like it very much; 1=I don't like it at all).

Bullying Behaviors

Results indicate that the experimental group ($M=1.26$, $SD=.482$) and control group ($M=1.28$, $SD=.490$) report saying something mean to someone in class “never or almost never.” From pretest to posttest, the experimental group ($M=1.22$, $SD=.455$) and control group ($M=1.26$, $SD=.480$) report teasing someone in class “never or almost never.” Finally, students from the experimental group ($M=1.10$, $SD=.378$) and control group ($M=1.10$, $SD=.353$) report bullying someone in class “never or almost never.”

Table 4.3 Bullying Behaviors

Item	Pretest	Posttest	F-value	Significance
Say something mean to someone in class				
Experimental Group	1.24	1.28	.288	NS
Control Group	1.24	1.33		
Tease someone in class				
Experimental Group	1.21	1.23		
Control Group	1.24	1.28		
Bully someone in class				
Experimental Group	1.10	1.10		
Control Group	1.10	1.11		

N = 542; Missing values excluded from analyses. Means based on 3-point scale (1=never or almost never; 2=sometimes; 3=a lot).

Perceived Importance of Stopping Bullying Behaviors

Results indicated that students from the experimental group ($M=2.78$, $SD=.485$) and control group ($M=2.73$, $SD=.541$) reported that it is important to stop name-calling. From pretest to posttest, the experimental group ($M=2.77$, $SD=.525$) and control group ($M=2.70$, $SD=.572$) reported that it is important to stop dissing. Results revealed that the experimental group ($M=2.79$, $SD=.551$) and control group ($M=2.79$, $SD=.551$) felt it was important to stop bullying. From pretest to posttest, students from experimental group ($M=2.81$, $SD=.468$) and control group ($M=2.78$, $SD=.508$) reported that it was important to stop ridiculing. Students from the experimental group ($M=2.77$, $SD=.523$) and control group ($M=2.76$, $SD=.535$) reported it was important to stop put-downs. From pretest to posttest, results indicated that the experimental group ($M=2.78$, $SD=.505$) and control group ($M=2.72$, $SD=.575$) felt it was important to stop teasing.

Table 4.4 Perceived Importance of Reducing Bullying Behaviors

Item	Pretest	Posttest	F-value	Significance
Important to stop name-calling				
Experimental Group	2.80	2.76	.559	NS
Control Group	2.72	2.75		
Important to stop dissing				
Experimental Group	2.79	2.76		
Control Group	2.70	2.71		
Important to stop bullying				
Experimental Group	2.77	2.82		
Control Group	2.77	2.82		
Important to stop ridiculing				
Experimental Group	2.82	2.81		
Control Group	2.77	2.80		
Important to stop put-downs				
Experimental Group	2.75	2.78		
Control Group	2.76	2.77		
Important to stop teasing				
Experimental Group	2.78	2.78		
Control Group	2.71	2.73		

N = 542; Missing values excluded from analyses. Means based on 5-point scale (3=Very Important; 2=Kind of important; 1=Not important).

Positive Class Feelings

From pretest to posttest, results indicate the experimental group ($M=2.54$, $SD=.544$) and the control group ($M=2.52$, $SD=.525$) reported feeling happy in class. Students from the experimental group ($M=2.78$, $SD=6.10$) and control group ($M=4.34$, $SD=13.67$) reported feeling enthusiastic in class.

Table 4.5 Positive Class Feelings

Item	Pretest	Posttest	F-value	Significance
Happy in class				
Experimental Group	2.56	2.52	.201	NS
Control Group	2.55	2.48		
Enthusiastic in class				
Experimental Group	2.41	3.18		
Control Group	3.91	4.99		

N = 542; Missing values excluded from analyses. Means based on 3-point scale (3=A lot of the time; 2=sometimes; 1=never or almost never).

Negative Class Feelings

Results indicated that the experimental group ($M = 1.41$, $SD = .564$) and the control group ($M=1.38$, $SD=.551$) reported feeling “never or almost never” sad in class. From pretest to posttest, the experimental group ($M=1.62$, $SD=.639$) and control group ($M=1.76$, $SD=.646$) reported feeling “never or almost never” bored in class. Students from the experimental group ($M=1.29$, $SD=.501$) and control group ($M=1.26$, $SD=.529$) reported feeling “never or almost never” angry in class. Finally, results indicate that the experimental group ($M=1.34$, $SD=.588$) and the control group ($M=1.35$, $SD=.605$) reported feeling “never or almost never” lonely in class.

Table 4.6 Negative Class Feelings

Item	Pretest	Posttest	F-value	Significance
Sad in class				
Experimental Group	1.38	1.43	1.090	NS
Control Group	1.38	1.38		
Bored in class				
Experimental Group	1.64	1.60		
Control Group	1.72	1.81		
Angry in class				
Experimental Group	1.27	1.32		
Control Group	1.23	1.31		
Lonely in class				
Experimental Group	1.36	1.32		
Control Group	1.34	1.36		

N = 542; Missing values excluded from analyses. Means based on 3-point scale (1=never or almost never; 2=sometimes; 3=a lot).

Perceived Ability to Stop Bullying Behaviors

Results indicate that the experimental group ($M=4.09$, $SD=1.16$) and the control group ($M=4.18$, $SD=1.07$) report it was possible to stop name-calling “most of the time.” From pretest to posttest, the experimental group ($M=4.20$, $SD=1.082$) and control group ($M=4.24$, $SD=1.067$) report it was possible to stop dissing “most of the time.” Students from experimental group ($M=4.32$, $SD=1.09$) and control group ($M=4.45$, $SD=.999$) report it was possible to stop bullying “most of the time.” In addition, the experimental group ($M=4.04$, $SD=1.25$) and control group ($M=4.24$, $SD=1.12$) report it was possible to stop ridiculing “most of the time.” From pretest to posttest, the experimental group ($M=4.16$, $SD=1.13$) and control group ($M=4.30$, $SD=1.06$) report it was possible to stop put-downs “most of the time.” Finally, students from the experimental group ($M=4.11$, $SD=1.18$) and the control group ($M=4.20$, $SD=1.13$) report it was possible to stop teasing “most of the time.”

Table 4.7 Perceived Ability to Stop Bullying Behaviors

Item	Pretest	Posttest	F-value	Significance
Students able to stop name-calling				
Experimental Group	4.17	4.00	.277	NS
Control Group	4.30	4.02		
Students able to stop dissing				
Experimental Group	4.26	4.13		
Control Group	4.32	4.13		
Students able to stop bullying				
Experimental Group	4.38	4.25		
Control Group	4.52	4.35		
Students able to stop ridiculing				
Experimental Group	4.12	3.96		
Control Group	4.33	4.09		
Students able to stop put-downs				
Experimental Group	4.23	4.08		
Control Group	4.36	4.21		
Students able to stop teasing				
Experimental Group	4.21	4.00		
Control Group	4.29	4.07		

N = 542; Missing values excluded from analyses. Means based on 5-point scale (3=Very Important; 2=Kind of important; 1=Not important).

Perceived Safety at School

Results indicate that the experimental group ($M=2.80$, $SD=.450$) and control group ($M=2.81$, $SD=.432$) report feeling safe in class. From pretest to posttest, the experimental group ($M=2.46$, $SD=.597$) and control group ($M=2.38$, $SD=.649$) report feeling “OK” on the playground. Finally, the experimental group ($M=2.61$, $SD=.577$) and control group ($M=2.66$, $SD=.564$) report feeling safe in the hallways.

Table 4.8 Perceived Safety at School

Item	Pretest	Posttest	F-value	Significance
Feel safe in class				
Experimental Group	2.80	2.80	1.450	NS
Control Group	2.83	2.79		
Feel safe on playground				
Experimental Group	2.42	2.50		
Control Group	2.39	2.37		
Feel safe in hallways				
Experimental Group	2.62	2.60		
Control Group	2.65	2.67		

N = 542; Missing values excluded from analyses. Means based on 3-point scale (3=Very safe; 1=Not safe).

Demographic Interaction

Analyses were conducted to test for potential interaction between demographic variables. MANOVAS were performed for parametric demographic variables to examine if there was a significant effect between school (experimental condition) and grade level. In this manner, potential confounding variables were controlled.

Hypothesis Testing

Null Hypothesis One: DLAM will have no significant effect on school connectedness.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the DLAM program on school connectedness. Results showed that there was no significant difference between the experimental group and control group regarding school connectedness $F(2, 1040)=.180, p=.835$. Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. It was concluded that the DLAM program had no effect on school connectedness.

Null Hypothesis Two: DLAM will have no significant effect on bullying behavior.

A MANOVA was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the DLAM program on bullying behavior. Results showed there was no significant difference between the experimental group and control group regarding bullying behavior $F(3, 1012)=.288$, $p=.834$. Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. It was therefore concluded that the DLAM program had no effect on bullying behavior.

Null Hypothesis Three: DLAM will have no significant effect on perceived importance of reducing bullying behavior.

A MANOVA was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the DLAM program on perceived importance of reducing bullying behavior. Results showed there was no significant difference between experimental groups and control groups regarding perceived importance of reducing bullying behavior $F(6, 1015)=.559$, $p=.763$. Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. It was therefore concluded that the DLAM program had no effect on perceived importance of reducing bullying behavior.

Null Hypothesis Four: DLAM will have no significant effect on perceived ability to reduce bullying behaviors.

A MANOVA was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the DLAM program on perceived ability to reduce bullying behaviors. Results showed there was no significant difference between experimental group and control group regarding perceived importance of stopping bullying behaviors $F(6, 1019)=.277$, $p=.948$. Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. It was therefore concluded that the DLAM program had no effect on perceived importance of stopping bullying behaviors.

Null Hypothesis Five: DLAM will have no significant effect on positive feelings toward class.

A MANOVA was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the DLAM program on positive feelings toward class. Results showed there was no significant difference between experimental group and control group regarding positive feelings toward class $F(2, 1040)=.201, p=.818$. Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. It was therefore concluded that the DLAM program had no effect on positive feelings toward class.

Null Hypothesis Six: DLAM will have no significant effect on negative feelings toward class.

A MANOVA was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the DLAM program on negative feelings toward class. Results showed there was no significant difference between experimental group and control group regarding negative feelings toward class $F(4, 1019)=1.090, p=.360$. Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. It was therefore concluded that the DLAM program had no effect on negative feelings toward class.

Null Hypothesis Seven: DLAM will have no significant effect on perceived safety at school.

A MANOVA was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the DLAM program on perceived safety at school. Results showed there was no significant difference between experimental group and control group regarding perceived safety at school $F(3, 1017)=1.450, p=.227$. Therefore, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. It was therefore concluded that the DLAM program had no effect on perceived safety at school.

Discussion

A total of 542 first through sixth graders were surveyed for this study. The overall response rate was 100% (542/542). Participants in this study were elementary students at two schools in Northwestern Ohio. Half of the students participated in the DLAM program.

Overall, students from the experimental and control groups were happy with school and happy coming to school in the morning. On average, students from the experimental and control groups were happy and enthusiastic in class. Students reported that they were “never or almost never” sad, bored, angry, or lonely in class. Most students felt safe at school, although the majority of students reported feeling “OK” on the playground.

In addition, students from both groups felt that it was important to stop bullying behaviors at school. Bullying behaviors included teasing, dissing, bullying, and put-downs. From pretest to posttest, most students felt that bullying behaviors could be stopped “most of the time.”

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Bullying behaviors are one violent behavior occurring among US youth. Bullying behaviors include physical attacks and verbal attacks, including name-calling and put-downs. On average, one in six students in 6th through 10th grade are sometimes bullied while one in twelve report being bullied at least once per week (Nansel et al., 2001). Due to the increasing severity of bullying, additional attention has been given to problems associated with bullying as well as prevention programs.

Bullies and bullying victims face many effects from bullying. Specifically, bullying victims suffer from low self-esteem, physical injury and low academic achievement (Hoover & Oliver, 1996, Nansel et al, 2001). Each day, 160,000 students report missing school due to fear of bullying. Conversely, bullies also suffer long-term consequences related to their behavior. Children who bully are more likely to commit crimes in adolescence and adulthood including vandalism and shop-lifting (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Forero, McLellan, Rissel, & Bauman, 1999; Rigby & Cox, 1996).

Bullying prevention programs have been established to decrease bullying behaviors at school. Methods of bully prevention include increasing adult supervision of high-risk areas, increasing adult involvement at school, and setting firm rules against bullying (Olweus, 1999). Overall awareness of bullying behaviors by students and school staff also decreases the behavior.

DLAM is one such bullying prevention program. Through music and activities, the goal of the program is to increase student awareness, explore individual and class

feelings about bullying, and increase student appreciation of diversity. DLAM occurs once per week in the classroom. Finally, teachers are offered a two-day training session to learn about DLAM activities.

A comprehensive review of the literature found no published study, which evaluated the effectiveness of the Don't Laugh at Me (DLAM) program. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of the DLAM program on increasing school connectedness and decreasing bullying behaviors. Chapter one addressed the problem, purpose, research questions, hypotheses, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and operational definitions. Chapter two reviewed the professional literature regarding bully prevention programs, specifically among elementary and middle school students. Chapter three discussed the participants, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis in the present study. Chapter four addressed the results of this study. Finally, chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study and presents conclusions. Recommendations for future research and future bully prevention programs are also offered.

Conclusions

This study found that the DLAM program was ineffective in reducing bullying behaviors and increasing school connectedness. From pretest to posttest, there were no significant differences between the experimental group and control group. Specifically, there were no significant differences in school connectedness, bullying behaviors, importance of reducing bullying behaviors, positive and negative feelings toward class, perceived ability to reduce bullying behaviors, and perceived safety at school. This was a

short-term evaluation of DLAM. Since there are no significant short-term differences between the groups, it is unlikely that there will be long-term differences between the two populations.

There are a variety of reasons that the DLAM program may be ineffective. First, adult involvement in bullying prevention programs is essential to program effectiveness. Although teachers play an important role in the DLAM program, the role of school staff is not as extensive as in other programs. In DLAM, classroom teachers lead activities and provide support to students. However, other staff members do not have key roles in bullying prevention. Successful programs utilize adults throughout the school. Furthermore, DLAM is not always employed as a school-wide effort. In a school, only one or two classrooms may employ the program to decrease bullying behaviors. In addition, training for teachers and school staff has been associated with decreases in bullying behavior. DLAM offers a two-day training program; however, it is not required, and program materials can be obtained from the DLAM website. Next, classroom rules are established against bullying, but rules against bullying for the entire school are not required. Successful programs establish school-wide rules against bullying.

Discussion

The literature reveals that a whole-school approach is most successful in combating bullying. To ensure success, the climate of the entire school needs to be positive and caring. Dan Olweus, a leading expert in bullying and bullying prevention, has created a model for successful bully prevention programs (1999). His methods for bullying prevention include a variety of techniques, which employ the whole school

community. Specifically, these methods include assessing the extent of the bullying problem, forming a bullying prevention committee, requiring talks between bullies and victims, and involving parents of the bullies and victims in the situation. In addition, this program encourages adult involvement in problem-solving and increasing awareness among adults and students at the school. Long-term evaluations of his program found a 50% reduction in bullying behavior.

In addition, four basic principles are often utilized in bully prevention programs (Olweus, 1999). First, successful programs set firm rules against bullying both in the classroom and on school grounds. In comparison, DLAM establishes a “ridicule-free zone” in the classroom by encouraging teachers to create a list of rules that prevents bullying and promotes positive behaviors. Although this is a positive step, school-wide rules have been most effective in decreasing bullying. On the school level, students receive a consistent message that bullying is not acceptable. Moreover, most successful programs employ non-hostile, non-physical consequences for unacceptable behavior. Although DLAM encourages teachers to penalize students who have broken the classroom rules against bullying, no strategies are given as part of the program. Perhaps, offering specific strategies to teachers regarding unacceptable behavior would convey the importance of non-hostile, non-physical methods of discipline.

In addition, adults play a significant role in successful bully prevention programs. Increasing adult awareness of bullying and increasing positive adult involvement is an important step to decreasing bullying behavior. Teachers, school staff, and parents can all be utilized to address these aspects of bullying prevention. In DLAM, teachers are actively involved in the program; however, much of the focus is on increasing the

awareness of students regarding bullying. Perhaps, it would be more effective to focus on raising the awareness of teachers and other school personnel concerning bullying. Teachers and school staff may be more likely to intervene in bullying situations than students. Finally, adults at school serve as both positive role models and authority figures in students' academic and social life. The main approach of DLAM is to promote student awareness and explore feelings regarding bullying to decrease the behavior. Again, increasing adult involvement may improve the program. Adult role models are imperative to students' academic and social success.

One method of reducing bullying behaviors is to increase teacher confidence in dealing with bullying behavior. Teachers are willing to intervene in bullying episodes; however, they feel low to moderately confident in their ability to deal with bullying (Boulton, 1997; Dake, 2003). Furthermore, teachers report that they would like more training regarding bully behaviors and prevention techniques (Boulton, 1997). As aforementioned, DLAM has a two-day training program for teachers. Much of the training concentrates on the in-class activities of the DLAM program. In fact, DLAM assumes that educators at the training have extensive knowledge regarding bullying and encourages trainers to briefly go over bullying behaviors. Offering information on bullying episodes may aid teachers in identifying and intervening in bullying episodes.

In addition, there are many myths regarding bullying. One common myth is that bullies most likely choose students who are overweight, wear glasses, are of a different racial or ethnic background, or speak with different dialect from their peers. However, research fails to support this; instead, studies reveal students who have specific personality traits are most likely to be targeted by bullies (Olweus, 1978). In comparison,

DLAM focuses on appreciation of differences, including racial and ethnic background and physical differences. Many of the program activities attempt to decrease bullying by changing students' attitudes towards and perceptions of differences among peers. Once student attitudes and perceptions are changed, it is thought that students will no longer target students who are different from them thereby reducing bullying behavior. The program erroneously targets this as a method of reducing bullying. Therefore, it is not surprising that the DLAM program does not reduce bullying behavior.

Furthermore, research indicates that peers play a significant role in bullying behaviors. In general, students hold negative views of peers who bully. Bullying involves bullies, victims, and also students who take on participatory roles including encouraging the bully or defending the victim. It is important that bully prevention programs address the bystanders and not just the bullies and victims. Although DLAM integrates every student into activities, it does not incorporate specific activities aimed at bystanders into the program. Including a group component in any bully prevention program may be helpful in decreasing bullying behavior. Perhaps, role-playing peer interventions would increase the likelihood a student would intervene in a bullying episode. Moreover, research indicates that peers trained to intervene in bullying episodes are effective in reducing the behavior (Salmivalli, 1999). In fact, one study showed that students were effective 57% of the times they intervened (Salmivalli, 1999). DLAM fails to address this aspect of bully prevention. Adding this component to the program may increase its effectiveness.

DLAM employs a variety of activities in its program. Activities fall under four different categories including expression of feelings, caring, compassion, and

cooperation, resolving conflict creatively, and celebrating diversity. The goal of expressing feelings is to allow students to identify how they feel and share those feelings with peers. In this manner, DLAM hopes students will think about others' feelings in the future thereby creating a more caring classroom. An effective way to create a caring classroom is to involve adults in student activities. Adults from the school and community can serve as positive role models while also offering praise and encouragement to all students. In caring, compassion, and cooperation, classroom rules are established against bullying. Students are also encouraged to create a community action project. Perhaps, it would be more effective to bring the community into the classroom. Open houses, school-community activities, or even a mentoring program can contribute to a caring school-community environment. Next, resolving conflict creatively utilizes empathy and encourages students to stand up against bullying. However, it may be more effective to use extensive role-playing activities to practice intervening in bullying episodes. Role-playing is an effective way to teach children more positive behaviors. Finally, in celebrating diversity, students identify similarities and differences, learn about prejudice, and learn to appreciate differences. To decrease bullying behavior, it may be more effective to create a peer intervention program. As mentioned previously, peer intervention is a successful method of reducing bullying.

As part of the DLAM curriculum, activities hope to raise students' sense of connection to school. Students who report a high level of connection to the school environment tend to choose healthier behaviors than students who are not connected to school. Bonny, Britto, Klosterman, Hornung & Slap (2002) suggest that there is a strong relationship between school connectedness and positive behavior. Increased school

connectedness contributes to increases in positive youth behavior. Overall, students reporting high levels of school connectedness performed well academically, were involved in extracurricular activities, reported better health status, fewer nurse visits, and less use of alcohol and cigarettes.

Essential features of school connectedness are also essential features of bullying prevention programs. One vital feature of school connectedness is a warm, caring environment in which all students feel accepted and supported. Youth choose healthier behaviors in a caring, supportive environment that encourages autonomy as well as self-regulation (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). Students may be less likely to bully in a caring school environment. In addition, bullying victims may feel more supported by adults at school and may be more likely to ask for help from an adult. School administration and staff should work to establish a caring environment for students.

One negative consequence of bullying is decreased self-esteem in both bullies and bullying victims. School connectedness has been associated with increases in self-esteem among youth (McBride, et al., 1995). Students who are connected to the school environment often report that they feel good about themselves, they are supported at school, and they have friends at school. Additionally, high self-esteem is correlated with increased academic achievement and decreased negative youth behavior (Scales & Leffert, 1999). In the school environment, teachers and school staff can contribute to high student self-esteem. Praise, understanding, and positive attention, all aspects of school connectedness, are necessary for youth to have high self-esteem (Karcher, 2002). In particular, teachers can offer praise and encouragement to all students in the

classroom. Increasing school connectedness may increase self-esteem thereby enhancing academic achievement and reducing problem behavior.

Recommendations

Recommendations for practice. The purpose of the present study was to examine the effectiveness of the DLAM program on increasing school connectedness and decreasing bullying behaviors.

This study found that DLAM is ineffective in increasing school connectedness and decreasing bullying behaviors. Research indicates that a whole school approach is the most effective method of decreasing bullying. To increase the effectiveness of DLAM, a whole-school approach should be utilized. Successful programs establish school-wide rules against bullying behavior and follow-up with non-hostile, non-physical consequences. Furthermore, in a whole school approach, adults play a key role in identifying and preventing bullying behavior. Specifically, adults carefully monitor high-risk areas such as restrooms, playgrounds, and hallways. Finally, effective methods of bullying prevention incorporate students, teachers, staff, and parents into the program. Teachers, staff, and parents can serve as positive role models for students while also deterring bullying behaviors.

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations may be helpful in improving DLAM: 1) utilize a whole-school approach, 2) increase adult awareness of bullying behaviors, 3) establish firm rules against bullying behavior and follow through with non-hostile, non-physical consequences for misbehavior, 4) monitor high-risk areas such as hallways, playgrounds, and restrooms that are often under-

supervised by school staff, and 5) incorporate students, teachers, staff, and parents into the program.

Recommendations to improve this research. This study utilized a sample of 1st through 6th graders at a Midwestern elementary school. This study may have been more generalizable if a wider variety of elementary schools were surveyed. Also, expanding the sample size to more students in the DLAM program could have improved the power of this study.

For this study, the survey instrument addressed school connectedness, bullying behaviors, feelings toward school, perceived importance of reducing bullying behaviors, positive feelings toward class, negative feelings toward class, and perceived safety at school. From test to retest, stability reliability of the instrument was low. Perhaps a more stable instrument may reveal different findings regarding the effectiveness of DLAM. Perhaps the program was effective but the instrument could not detect this due to its instability. In addition, readability of the survey may factor in to the results of the study. Although teachers read instructions verbatim, the same survey was used in all grade levels. There may be differences in the readability of the survey based on grade level.

Recommendations for future research. More studies need to be conducted in the area of bullying prevention. Specifically, further research on the extent of bullying in schools is necessary to gain an accurate picture of bullying in US schools. Also, studies regarding teachers confidence in employing methods of bullying prevention may provide information to improve education and training for teachers. Also, exploring the

differences based on grade level and gender may provide additional information about the program.

In addition, students who feel connected to the school environment choose healthier behaviors than students who do not feel connected to school. Future studies should investigate the potential relationship between bullying behaviors and school connectedness.

Finally, researchers in bullying prevention need to communicate their findings to teachers and other school-based personnel. Collaboration among health and school professionals is essential to improve current bullying prevention programs.

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Appendix A

Don't Laugh at Me Survey

“Don’t Laugh At Me” Student Questionnaire

Dear students,

We need your help to find out what you like about your school and what could be made better. Please answer the questions below. Please do not write your name on this paper. That way, you do not have to worry about anyone else seeing your answers or ever knowing how you answered the questions.

This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. We hope that you will feel free to be totally honest and answer the questions in a way that shows what you really feel. That will help us a lot.

You can also help in the following ways: Please do not look at your classmates when your teacher is reading to you or speaking - or when you are deciding on your answers. Also, please do not talk to anyone except for the teacher. Please feel free to ask the teacher a question about this questionnaire or for any other reason. If you have a question, please raise your hand and quietly wait for your teacher’s help.

1. I am a: girl ☐ boy ☒

2. What grade are you in?

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐

3. This is how I feel about my school:



I like it a lot

☐



I like it

☐



OK

☒



I don’t like it
very much

☐



I don’t like it
at all

☐

4. Most of the time, this is the way I feel when I'm coming to school in the morning:

				
Very happy	Happy	OK	Unhappy	Very unhappy
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

5. This is how much I like the children in this class:

				
I like them a lot	I like them	OK	Not very much	Not at all
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

6. I feel happy in this class:

		
A lot of the time	Sometimes	Never or almost never
[]	[]	[]

7. I feel enthusiastic* (interested and excited) in this class:

[]	[]	[]
-----	-----	-----

8. I feel sad in this class:

		
Never or almost never	Sometimes	A lot of the time

9. I feel bored in this class:

[]	[]	[]
-----	-----	-----

10. I feel angry in this class:

[]	[]	[]
-----	-----	-----

11. I feel lonely* in this class:

[]	[]	[]
-----	-----	-----

12. The children in this class:

			
	A lot	OK	Not very much
Like me	[]	[]	[]
Respect* me	[]	[]	[]

13. The children in this class:

			
	A lot	OK	Not very much
Like each other	[]	[]	[]
Respect* each other	[]	[]	[]

14. The adults in this school care about me:

			
	A lot	OK	Not very much
	[]	[]	[]
	[]	[]	[]

15. How often does this happen to you?

			
	A lot	Sometimes	Never or almost never
Another child in <i>this</i> class says something nice to me	[]	[]	[]
Another child in <i>this</i> class smiles at me	[]	[]	[]

19. This is how safe* I feel in each of these places:

	 Very safe	 OK	 Not safe
This classroom	[]	[]	[]
On the playground	[]	[]	[]
In the hallways	[]	[]	[]

20. In trying to imagine a happier classroom, how important do *you* think it would be to stop:

	 Very important	 Kind of important	 Not important
Name-calling	[]	[]	[]
Dissing*	[]	[]	[]
Bullying*	[]	[]	[]
Making fun of someone (ridiculing)	[]	[]	[]
Put-downs*	[]	[]	[]
Teasing	[]	[]	[]