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Parent and Principals' Perceptions of Cyberbullying in 21st Century Rural Elementary Schools

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Kathleen Hosterman

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2016

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Abstract

Cyberbullying is a common form of harassment and aggression engaged in by today's youth. This phenomenon is affecting primary-school-aged children as technology devices are now made available to elementary school students in rural settings. Based on the framework of Bandura's social cognitive theory, this mixed methods project study included a survey to quantitatively investigate the associations between parental knowledge of the phenomenon of cyberbullying and children's grade levels, and a focus group to gather qualitative data from school principals regarding their perceptions of the extent and impact of cyberbullying in 4 rural elementary schools in Massachusetts. Due to highly skewed survey responses, basic assumptions for chi-square analyses were not met; therefore, frequencies were examined along with the qualitative data that were coded and analyzed for patterns and themes. The 4 principals reported ongoing concerns at the school level that cyberbullying was clearly affecting the school day, school resources, and peer relationships. Survey responses from 162 parents indicated they were not fully aware of the dangers of cyberbullying at all grade levels. In concert with the literature review, these findings were applied to the development of a 12-month online cyber training curriculum for parents and students. Social change implications include minimizing the effects of cyberbullying in schools by training parents to understand social media sites and associated dangers for their children.

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Dedication

This dedication page is the smallest of tokens to all who have gone through this long and difficult journey with me. The process has consumed my life over the past 5 years, and I only completed it because of my faith and my family. Just before beginning this process, I sat with my father to discuss the potential cost and requirements of such a rigorous academic pursuit. My father, a voracious reader throughout his life, had just turned 70. Although he had not graduated from high school, he reminded me of the great opportunities that had come into my life because of the academic achievements I had made up to that point. He then encouraged me to proceed with my doctoral dream by explaining that both money and time were a small price to pay for the joy and benefit of acquiring lasting knowledge; and hopefully a little wisdom along the way.

I also have to acknowledge my husband of 32 years for making the practical side of this journey a possibility. Beyond work and church, nearly every hour of free time has been devoted to this doctoral process. He lovingly and willingly picked up the slack with laundry, dishes, cooking, yardwork, grocery shopping, and the list could go on. He has missed vacation opportunities or has traveled alone in order for me to have week-long windows of time that could be spent in intensive writing blocks. He also would remind me over and over that I am one of the most determined people he knows, and he had no doubts in my ability to complete the process, often when I did not believe that about myself.

I also have to thank and praise my Heavenly Father for the inner capacity to keep moving forward when I felt that I could not take another step. His grace has been sufficient for me. “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did

not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (I Corinthians 15:10).

Acknowledgments

I want to sincerely give credit to my doctoral chair, Dr. Pamela Harrison, for her absolute support and guidance during this doctoral journey. Like my husband, she too kept me from being defeated by feelings of hopelessness or incompetence. She was like a taffy puller during this journey. I would feel stretched to the end of my capacity to do one more revision, whereupon she would return to me the document with just enough information and encouragement to have me release my strained nerves and go back to work. Each time the document would need fewer revisions, and her prodding would become firmer as she assessed my need for accountability with the next review. How she was able to walk such a fine line between providing absolute support followed by her expressing a solemn charge could only be done after many years of carrying out this role of mentor with many successful doctoral candidates.

In addition to Dr. Harrison, I would like to acknowledge my second committee member, Dr. Lucille Lang, and my university research reviewer, Dr. Vicki Underwood. Both of these professors supported the revisions and improvements to the quantitative section of my study, which was by far the most difficult part of the writing process. Without their unflagging assistance and encouragement, I would not have been able to complete this doctoral journey.

I would also like to express my love and gratitude to my ladies' Sunday School class. They prayed with me and for me and allowed me multiple opportunities to lament my crazy, overtaxing life during our Sunday sessions. It was like receiving free therapy from a group of 12 psychoanalysts who helped me week after week to run this gauntlet.

Finally, I must thank Dr. Erin Nosek for her support and willingness to go before five school committees to open the door for me to gain access to a solid participant pool for my study. She also supplied technology support through both information technology personnel and online resources that enhanced my work. Having gone through the process herself, she intentionally set out to allow me to build capacity for my own practice by learning through this process, thereby making me a better administrator.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

In the first decade of the 21st century, school districts and administrators across the United States created bullying prevention and intervention plans in response to increased bullying reports in schools. In many states these plans were adopted as formalized policies. As early as 2000, 78% of administrators across the nation indicated a formal bullying prevention plan was in place at the local level (Kaufman et al., 2002). Embedded in these plans is self-advocacy training that empowers targets of bullying to respond in an appropriate and assertive manner. Both educator and victim awareness has led aggressors, afraid of repercussions from overt bullying behavior, to seek out anonymous methods for targeting their victims (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). This new form of bullying, *cyberbullying*, has been defined as a repeated willful mental assault through the use of computers, cellular phones, or any other electronic device (Accordino & Accordino, 2011).

In 2010, 8% of public schools reported that cyberbullying occurred daily (Robers, Kemp, & Truman, 2013). School officials have some predictors of likely cyberbullying candidates based on students who were targets of traditional bullying (Del Rey, Elipe, & Ortega-Ruiz, 2012). Del Rey et al. (2012) found that students who participated in bullying as traditional aggressors were likely to cyberbully once technology was accessible. Unlike traditional bullying, where the correlation between being a target and an aggressor is limited, there is growing evidence that students who

are cyberbullies were often cyberbullied themselves (Jose, Kljakovic, Scheib, & Notter, 2012).

Traditional bullying, however, was found to be more stable over time than cyberbullying; that is, a traditional bully will continue to target the chosen victim, whereas the cyberbully may move on to numerous targets over time once the initial effect of the attack is experienced (Erentaite & Bergman, 2012). Nonetheless, cyberbullying can have a more devastating impact because of the importance adolescents place on the opinions of peers (Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2012a). Students who are the targets of cyberbullying may perceive that everyone in their peer group is aware of the harassment and often become depressed, afraid to attend school, and even suicidal (Bauman & Newman, 2013). In many cases, the cyberbully is anonymous, which causes further hurt, as the victim is unsure if any allies exist among his or her peer group (Accordino & Accordino, 2011).

In Section 1 of the project study, the local problem of increased cyberbullying faced by Best Elementary School (BES)—a pseudonym for the study school in a rural, south-central town in Massachusetts—is discussed, for the purpose of creating a cyberbullying intervention protocol based on collected data. The intervention program design incorporated the need to include family involvement and comprehensive lessons utilizing empathy, management of emotions, and positive assertiveness, all which have been shown to be effective in combatting cyberbullying (Low & Espelage, 2013). I explored potential intervention strategies that used these types of lessons targeting cyberbullying (see Appendix A).

Definition of the Problem

The local problem that was addressed in this study was the ongoing presence of cyberbullying in a local Massachusetts school district, in spite of targeted campaigns and policy adoptions regarding bullying, which were implemented in 2010. After the death of a Massachusetts ninth-grade girl on January 14, 2010 was directly linked to months of bullying and cyberbullying, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) mandated that all school districts would be held accountable for engaging students in the training necessary to create a more tolerant climate for school attendance. The governor of Massachusetts, Deval Patrick, signed into effect antibullying legislation in May 2010. This legislation was considered the most comprehensive student harassment law in the nation (McGoldrick, 2011). McGoldrick (2011) also described the limitations of the legislation by noting that a method for tracking and reporting incidents of bullying was missing from the law. This responsibility became the purview of the MADESE, who then turned to district superintendents of individual school districts to create, submit, and implement a plan to address this serious issue.

BES formally implemented the BES Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in December 2010. As part of that plan, anonymous bullying reporting forms were made available at two easily accessible locations in the building: outside the nurse's and school psychologist's offices and on the school website (Appendix B). Additionally, students were instructed through the Michigan Model for Health (Educational Materials Center, 2010) about the meaning of bullying and became self-advocates as well as peer advocates when observing bullying. Students reported bullying to administration and staff members

or submitted anonymous forms in a consistent manner, especially when incidents occurred in repeated episodes over time, based on BES Bullying Reporting Forms of 2010.

Beginning in December 2010, formal bullying data were logged in both the principal's and school psychologist's offices for the purpose of monitoring student social behavior and determining the effectiveness of the new district bullying policy. The data indicated that the Michigan Model for Health, adopted as the bullying prevention program in the same year, had a positive impact on school bullying and a reduction in incidents. Principal's suspension records showed five in-school suspensions for bullying and harassment were recorded for the entire school year of Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, down from nine in FY2009.

The collected evidence demonstrated, however, an increase in cyberbullying behaviors. One definition of cyberbullying is a recurring and deliberate psychological attack through the means of any electronic device (Accordino & Accordino, 2011). After three families reported cyberbullying incidents in early 2009, the BES principal (personal communication, September 2009) began keeping a cyberbullying log to track how often students reported cyberbullying events. Despite the implementation of the BES Bullying Prevention and Intervention Program in spring of 2010, reports of cyberbullying continued. These reports, tracked over time and through the school's cyberbullying log, began to include the method of communication and the aggressor's name when available.

During FY2010, students began bringing cellular phones with Internet access to school. In two cases, cyberbullying occurred during the school day through threatening

text messages, and in both cases the students received in-school suspensions. In FY2011, five families reported harassing e-mails being sent to their children by aggressors using pseudonyms (BES principal, personal communication, September 2011).

By FY2012, primary teachers were prepared for the signs of cyberbullying activity and spent time discussing its impact with their classes. Still, three parents reported cyberbullying activity, one through a phone call to the office, one through a personal visit to the principal with the offending e-mails in hand, and a third through e-mail contact with administration. Two sixth-grade teachers intervened in two cyberbullying events and reported their concerns and actions to the office, and two third-grade students' parents reported their children were tagged with inappropriate names in an online game. The BES principal recorded all of these occurrences in the BES Cyberbullying Log. Only two incidences of cyberbullying were recorded in FY2013, which was a drop from previous years. One possible explanation for the drop is the low number of female students in the sixth grade during FY2013: only 12 out of 42 students, based on the Principal's Enrollment Report of May 2013. Local evidence showed that most cyberbullying incidences occurred between BES female students, with only two boys reported in any cyberbullying incidents: one as the target and one as the aggressor. These reports left the principal at a loss as to how to support families due to the off-campus nature of the assaults. Because cyberbullying is shown to have a significant impact on the learning environment, consideration of this issue at an earlier educational level is imperative and could lend insight into the preteen mindset regarding cyberbullying (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009).

Local principals, although made aware of cyberbullying occurrences, cannot intervene in these events unless the impact infiltrates social interactions while on school property. This position is held by both local district authorities and by state mandate. MADESE (2010b) outlined in its bullying and harassment policy the following:

> Acts of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation are prohibited: at a location, activity, function or program that is *not* school related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a school district or school, *if* the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on their rights at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Nothing contained herein shall require schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs. (p. 9)

Though students are not aware of the policy, as such, they do not fear school authority because they believe they will not be discovered (Accordino & Accordino, 2011). Also, students believe that it is significantly more likely that a target will be harmed than that an aggressor will face consequences (Pettalia, Levin, & Dickinson, 2013). This suggests that support is needed for students and families of both targets and aggressors to improve understanding of the impact of cyberbullying.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

From 2005 to 2008 the BES office received no reports of cyberbullying. However, on January 15 and January 27 of 2009, two different parents called the office to

indicate that their children were bullied while online. Both reports were by parents whose children had been threatened by particular classmates in e-mail threads. A third parent called to explain that his child was verbally intimidated through her Myspace account. Two of the targets were in fifth grade, and one was in sixth. All three families indicated that they purchased new forms of technology during the Christmas holiday season. Per district-level administration, the building-based principal recommended that parents contact local authorities to report the incidents.

In FY2010, administrators noticed a marked increase in the number of students bringing cellular telephones with Internet access to school. Based on school rules, the phones were confiscated and held until a parent or adult family member could retrieve them from the office. When cyberbullying occurred during the school day through texts or e-mails, the principal engaged in mediation and meted out consequences for social intimidation. After two students had received in-school suspensions for cyber threats, the daytime cyber activity ended, and students once again went back to online interactions after the school day ended. To intervene, BES held a cyber awareness seminar to inform parents of cyber safety. Only six parents attended the event. In March 2010, a student in first grade brought a cellular telephone to school. At first, the device was thought to be a toy but was later confiscated when the student used it to send text messages to family members.

The formal BES Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan went into place in December 2010. As part of the plan, teachers trained students with age-appropriate lessons about the meaning of bullying and how to advocate for oneself or a peer in an

appropriate manner when witnessing victimization. The principal and school psychologist performed formal investigations based on each filed report, while following a specific set of protocols set out according to the plan. For a short time, bullying reports escalated as multiple incidents of peer conflict were reported as bullying. BES students were taught about the recurrent nature of bullying as well as the aggressor maintaining a disparity of power over the target. Students began to understand the difference between conflict and bullying and soon acquired understanding of their responsibility to speak out against targeted attacks on specific classmates.

This success did not translate to cyberbullying, although several cyber safety lessons were included in the BES Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan utilized by the school. Numerous electronic devices were now in the hands of nearly every fifth- and sixth-grade student in the school. Many reported getting Internet-accessible cellular phones, laptops, electronic tablets, e-readers, desktop computers, and even Internet-accessible video game components following the holiday break in December 2010.

From January through May of 2011, parents once again reported a number of cyberbullying incidents. Five parents made copies of the inappropriate and threatening e-mails, Facebook posts, and text messages. All but one of these verbal assaults were made by female students. The students were now becoming savvier in their attacks and using innuendo and pseudonyms to emotionally harm one another. In one instance, a female student began targeting another by referring to her as the “ugly sixth-grade red head.” With only two sixth-grade classes, the sixth-grade students indicated they knew who was being talked about when the principal investigated the report.

When the students began talking in class about the messages they were reading on Facebook, administration was able to intervene based on the activity impacting the learning environment. In this case, the cyberbully expressed her disbelief that her "teasing" was a "big deal." This corresponds with Slonje and Smith's (2008) findings that a cyberbully may not be aware of the level of injury caused by his or her behavior. Also, the targeted student explained she did not report the incident immediately because of feelings of shame and fear. At this point the school was able to mediate the situation, but the relationship between the girls was irreparably damaged. This parallels the findings of Beale and Hall (2007), who indicated that school intervention often occurs only after relationships have turned intimidating and hostile.

During FY2012, students found to exhibit bullying behaviors at school also began targeting peers in cyberspace. One sixth-grade student's parent called the office to explain that her daughter was crying herself to sleep based on the hate-filled e-mails she was receiving from a former friend. One parent e-mailed the administration to ask how his son could block someone on Myspace, and a third parent came to the office with a folder of e-mails that were anonymous and filled with threats of physical violence to her daughter. These were all involving fifth- and sixth-grade students, but the parents of several third-grade students reported their children being tagged in photos with inappropriate names that were then posted on the Internet as part of web-based video games.

Fifth- and sixth-grade teachers began spending greater class time discussing characteristics of cyberbullying and the devastating impact it can have on a classmate's

self-esteem. On two occasions, classroom teachers became aware of ongoing cyberbullying attacks prior to the parents of the targets. In both cases, parents of both the targets and the aggressors were stunned to learn of the venomous language being used to intimidate peers. During FY2013, two incidents of cyberbullying were reported in these grades through the use of the BES Bullying Reporting Form. One was filled out by a parent who had downloaded it from the school's website, and the other was filled out by the targeted student. In the first case, the student accused of sending inappropriate e-mails had formerly been a target of cyberbullying in an earlier grade. The second case was a student who was receiving hurtful and threatening text messages. The majority of students in Grades 5 and 6 in FY2013 were male, according to the Principal's Enrollment Report of May 2013. This is noted due to the findings of Bauman and Newman (2013), who observed girls were significantly more distressed by cyberbullying and more apt to participate as cyberbullies.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

According to a report from the National Center for Education Statistics, school violence decreased 74% between 1992 and 2010 (Robers, Zhang, Truman, & Snyder, 2012). However, cyberbullying has risen since 2000, with data from across the United States indicating that the percentage of school-age students who reported being cyberbullied increased from 6% to 11% between 2000 and 2010 (Finkelhor, 2013).

Slonje and Smith (2008) conducted a study of eight schools in Sweden involving students ages 12–20. Cyberbullying was found to be outpacing traditional bullying; 17% of students reported they were cyberbullied in the previous 2 weeks, whereas only 10%

reported being bullied through traditional means (Slonje & Smith, 2008). One study indicated that children who would never bully in face-to-face altercations now psychologically attacked peers without remorse as a result of the lack of emotional responsiveness from a faceless target (Accordino & Accordino, 2011). Additionally, because the cyberbully can be unaware of the harm caused by his or her actions, he or she does not benefit from remorse or empathy as a result of the behavior. This has the effect of allowing the aggressor to emotionally deny personal responsibility and take on an *avatar* or persona of an imaginary character who can act with impunity (Accordino & Accordino, 2011).

For the target of cyberbullying, the torment may be even worse than physical or verbal attacks that occur while within the environment of the aggressor. For this type of assault, the victim holds on to the hope of a safe haven once the school day ends and he or she can return home. However, the continuous attacks of a cyberbully follow the target into his or her home, dispelling hope of escape (T. Jacobs, 2010). In fact, the newest form of cyberbullying includes the aggressor taking on a fictitious name or pretending to be someone else to avoid consequences. In one case, several Indianapolis high school students set up a fake Twitter account in the name of their principal and used it to target a fellow student (Beale & Hall, 2007). This continual accessibility of the target and the feeling of anonymity by the aggressor allows the cyberbully to feel empowered, which often escalates the level of vindictiveness in each of the attacks (Beale & Hall, 2007). Hinduja and Patchin (2011) indicated this type of harassment is all the more devastating as it plays out in continuous, often around-the-clock torment for the victim.

Increased cyberbullying is also traceable to the ever-expanding access young children have to information and communications technology (ICT). The current trend is to purchase the latest web-based personal technology devices for students, even for those in elementary school, leading to growing concern about cyberbullying issues in the lives of ever younger children. Cyber technology was described by Rosen (2011) "as instinctive as air to today's youth" (p. 11). Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007) conducted a survey in which 97% of sixth-grade U.S. students indicated they had unmonitored access to either a cellular phone or the Internet. In another survey of students ages 11–18, 20% responded that they were bullied online, and the same percentage admitted to having bullied others in cyberspace (Roberts-Pittman, Slavens, & Balch, 2012). In the same survey, Roberts-Pittman et al. (2012) found more girls than boys acknowledged experiencing cyberbullying and that girls were more willing to share the information with adults.

Definitions

The following are the definitions of key terms in this study.

Aggressor: Individuals or groups who inflict emotional or psychological harm on others through the use of ICT devices are identified as aggressors (Lazuras, Barkoukis, Ourda, & Tsorbatzoudis, 2013).

Cyberbullying: For this study, cyberbullying is defined as intentional, repetitious harm combined with an imbalance of power inflicted through the use of ICT devices (Sabella, Patchin, & Hinduja, 2013). It is also a repetitive and destructive attitude focused on damaging other with the use of ICT devices (Li, 2007).

Information and communications technology (ICT): ICT is used to indicate multiple platforms and technology devices used for the purpose of communication (Lazuras et al., 2013). These devices may include computers, laptops, cellular telephones, tablet devices, or any other electronic device that allows communication between individuals or groups.

Target: Victims of cyberbullying attacks are identified as targets (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Significance

Tokunaga (2010) reported that 97% of American teenagers are utilizing the Internet through some type of ICT device. According to the Pew Internet and Internet Life Survey (as cited in Children Online, 2015), 33% of teens have suffered cyberbullying. Yet, 30% of parents allow their children Internet access without supervision (Children Online, 2015). With this ever-increasing accessibility of ICT, it is more important than ever to make young students aware of the damaging outcomes of cyberbullying.

Local Setting

As a rural school, BES has a small number of students who live in proximity of the school or of one another. Approximately 25 of the 320 BES students walk to and from school. All others ride one of five school buses or are driven by an adult. Between 2005 and 2013, only one report of a fight after school hours was filed with the main office. This occurred between cousins and did not impact the school setting. The number of documented reports to school officials of off-campus cyberbullying seems to indicate

that this is an issue impacting student life. Of additional concern is research finding that only 10% of students reported being cyberbullied to an adult (Bostic & Brunt, 2011). This finding would suggest that a significant number of cyberbullying incidents occur that are unknown to families as well as school staff.

These factors make cyberbullying behavior detrimental to the social, emotional, and academic lives of students at BES and indicate the importance of ascertaining parent knowledge of cyberbullying activity and behaviors that occur in the local district for the schools with similar demographic populations to the school identified with the problem. Parents are a key to gathering home-based knowledge of Internet activity, social media usage, and the current level of cyber awareness of the adults who are closest to students. In addition to the frequency information that can be provided by parents, it is equally important to gather the perceptions of principals, who are often the initial authority contacted by parents when cyberbullying is reported. The triangulation of the two data sources better addressed the problem of cyberbullying at this local school.

General Educational Context

Although students bullied through ICT devices have firsthand experience with the emotional pain involved, they tend to become aggressors themselves rather than confiding in supportive adults (Walrave & Heirman, 2011). This impacts the well-being of students' social and educational lives at school, as well as when away from the academic setting (Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009). This study is particularly important due to the increase in cyberbullying behaviors found at both the local and general educational level (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

What makes this study even more important is the lack of research targeted at elementary school students. As technology becomes readily available to ever-younger children, research is needed investigating the experiences of younger students. Although it is impossible to quantify the number of studies focused on urban and suburban students as compared to rural school populations, significantly fewer citations were found for rural students. Rural students are no longer immune to after-school bullying attacks based on their distance from potential aggressors. Students are targets anywhere and any time of the night or day (Roberts-Pittman et al., 2012).

The very accessibility of a cyberbullying target makes this problem important throughout American schools. The minimal reporting of cyberbullying attacks indicates that targets perceive that punishment will not have a significant impact in stopping this behavior (Pettalia et al., 2013). Instructional lessons that initiate understanding of the serious nature of cyberbullying have a greater capacity for changing behavior (Beale & Hall, 2007). Although these lessons were developed with the elementary learner in mind, they have the potential to be changed to developmentally appropriate scenarios and utilized for middle and high school students.

Also, it is important to share these data with college and university professors who train teachers and administrators. The growing body of cyberbullying research will benefit from more findings about elementary school students, including the age and methods that younger students choose for their initial involvement with this behavior. Sharing this information with future educators will provide some preparation to identify and manage this form of bullying.

Positive Social Change

Although it was not possible or practical in this study to interview children as firsthand participants, administrators have a wealth of knowledge to share based on their interactions with both the aggressors and targets of cyberbullying. This study has the capacity to create social change by minimizing the effects of cyberbullying on children and thereby impacting the level of violence that research has shown results from bullying (S. Paul, Smith, & Blumberg, 2012). This research offers insight into the preteen mindset regarding cyberbullying and provides implications for the development of an intervention approach promoting socially responsible cyber citizens (Keith & Martin, 2005).

Guiding Research Questions

Formal research about cyberbullying is still relatively new. Whereas research about this topic is more substantive for the adolescent and young adult years, the data collected for elementary-aged students is scarce. With district administrators attempting to protect local schools from being put into the untenable position of policing student behavior after the school day has ended, building principals often feel at a loss when seeking methods for supporting students and families.

The following six research questions (RQs) guided this study, as well as related hypotheses (H_a) and null hypotheses (H_0):

Qualitative:

RQ1: What are local elementary school principals' perceptions regarding the impact of off-campus cyberbullying on the in-school experiences of elementary school students who are involved in cyberbullying?

Quantitative:

RQ2: What are parents' perceptions of their children's computer and social media activities?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

$H_0$3: There is no significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a3: There is a significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

RQ4: Is there a significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

$H_0$4: There is no significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a4: There is a significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

RQ5. Is there a significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

$H_0$5: There is no significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a5: There is a significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

RQ6. Is there a significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

$H_0$6: There is no significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a6: There is a significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

Review of the Literature

Since 2010, when examination of the available literature began, the number of research studies specific to this study grew rapidly and allowed the literature review to continue over several years. A number of government and nonprofit research agencies

such as the U.S. Department of Education, MADESE, and Children Online provided statistical information to support the significance of bullying and cyberbullying. Peer-reviewed research studies, which form the foundation of the review, were located through online databases such as ERIC, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, EBSCOhost, PsycARTICLES, Sage Journals, and ScienceDirect.

Initially, I conducted all searches utilizing the word *cyberbullying* to gather as many different types of documentation about the behavior and scholarly writing about the topic as possible. After narrowing the research to particular themes, I conducted research based on seeking statistical data about cyberbullying and characteristics of cyberbullying. I also began to use specific delineators to seek specific information about cyberbullying: *characteristics, behaviors, impact, perceptions, evidence, prevalence, school outcomes, power imbalance, technology advances, technology availability, elementary school, comparison to bullying, differentiation with bullying,* and *rural school setting*. As I narrowed my delineators to *elementary school, primary school,* and *rural school cyberbullying*, I found limited research conducted about these populations.

The literature review begins with a discussion of the theoretical foundation for the study and considers the study through the lens of social cognitive theory. The review next investigates the characteristics of cyberbullying, followed by the behaviors of cyberbullying. The review then moves into developing an understanding of the impact and then the perceptions of this form of bullying. The largest section of the literature review is focused on the evidence and statistics surrounding cyberbullying. The review then examines the prevalence of victimization, aggression, and reporting of

cyberbullying, which is followed by accessibility data of ICT devices, data about potential for harm, anonymity data, and school outcome data. The penultimate section of the literature review considers the differences and similarities between bullying and cyberbullying, and the review ends with an overview of state cyberbullying laws and the correspondence to school policies.

Theoretical Foundation

Cyberbullying behavior and activity were investigated through the lens of Bandura's social cognitive theory. This theory contains four essential attributes of human agency: "intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness" (Ferrari, Robinson, & Yasnitsky, 2010, p. 109). Bandura (1989) suggested that self-motivation, environmental experiences, and cognitive decision making all work together to determine human behavior. However, Bandura (1989) also stated that a child's development of self-efficacy is influenced by numerous interacting influences, particularly those of friends and classmates, family members, and school. These influences can become predictors of success for a student in many life domains, including the child's life at school, in social settings, and in the development of clinical or behavioral issues (Ferrari et al., 2010).

Bandura also found that children imitate behavior or model responses when they expect some eventual measure of reward for these behaviors and responses (Bandura & Barab, 1971). Bandura and Barab (1971) indicated that a child's belief in consequences for particular behaviors impacts imitated responses, as well as the belief that there will be no consequences for those same behaviors. Bandura (2005), however, was clear in his

finding that individuals, including children, are creators of their own life circumstances with the ability to self-advocate and self-initiate change.

Social cognitive theory explains the implications for modeling and copying hostile behaviors in the context of cyberbullying. Through his aggression research in the 1960s using the Bobo doll, Bandura (2005) found that when children observed violent behavior, they imitated the same hostility rather than feeling pity for the doll. This indicated that the children detached from their ability to empathize with the doll because of the impact of the adult aggression they observed. As Bandura's theory grew, however, he added the concept that individuals are proactive and reflective in their own development. Individuals have the ability to adapt and change and to regulate their own behavior (Bandura, 2005).

Cyberbullying Characteristics

Cyberbullying is unlike bullying in the traditional sense in that it has several unique characteristics. Whereas typical bullying can be perpetrated through the perception of physical strength, popularity, or social status, cyberbullying is often carried out with complete anonymity. This can make the cyberbully seem to have much more power over the target than he or she actually has (Pettalia et al., 2013). Anonymity can allow the aggressor to go undetected, and when investigated by authorities, he or she can be difficult to trace (Roberts-Pittman et al., 2012). Another distinct characteristic of cyberbullying is the scope of the audience that can be aware of the harassment. The humiliation of the target is further intensified by the number of others who have access to the cyberbullying attack (Price & Dalgleish, 2010). A cyberbully will often send the same

harassing text messages, e-mails, or pictures to a target and then to large numbers of peers, who in turn share the information with additional contacts (Li, 2007). In some cases, embarrassing video clips or pictures have made their way to the Internet, causing intense shame and humiliation for the target (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

Another characteristic of cyberbullying is often impulsivity. In a physical setting, a slighted student may think through retaliation responses due to adult or peer witnesses present. However, because students believe their actions will go undetected, an online aggressor will often react first and worry about the consequences later (Sbarbaro & Smith, 2011). This is especially true of text messages or e-mails that students can send from the devices they carry with them all day (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009). However, a frightening characteristic evident in nearly all cases of cyberbullying is its invasiveness (Price & Dalgleish, 2010). Students have no way to escape the cyberbully. Even at home in the safety of their bedrooms, aggressors can attack (Tokunaga, 2010). Targets may begin to feel hopeless and often withdraw into severe depression (Lazuras et al., 2013).

A final characteristic of cyberbullying that was important to this study is the fact that it is rarely reported to adults. In one study, only 5% of students surveyed indicated that they reported to school staff and 10% to family members (Bostic & Brunt, 2011). Several reasons were given for this lack of willingness to apprise adults of what was happening. Adolescents generally feel that nothing can be done to help them, and they fear the loss of their own ICT devices or significant restrictions being placed on those devices (Swartz, 2009).

Cyberbullying Behaviors

Cyberbullying behaviors can lead to psychological and social harm. In the case of Principal Duffin of Palmer, Alaska, students created a counterfeit Myspace page for the principal to denigrate students with disabilities and those of specific ethnic origins (Davis, 2012). Once the posts were brought to her attention, the principal called in the authorities. Although the children were not typically known as problem students, their reputations along with the principal's were damaged (Davis, 2012).

It is important to differentiate between the characteristics of cyberbullying and the associated behaviors. In a study of more than 2,000 Luxembourger students, Steffgen, Konig, Pfetsch, and Melzer (2011) found that the infliction of harm was a key behavior of cyberbullying along with deliberate and repeated attacks. Steffgen et al. surveyed more than 900 boys and 1,000 girls from Grades 7–13. Because of the small size of the country, these participation numbers were representative of 73% of all public secondary school students in Luxembourg. The study indicated a significant lack of empathy between the aggressor and his or her target (Steffgen et al., 2011). Sahin (2012) indicated that cyberbullying behavior is akin to traditional bullying behavior with one distinction: It is grounded in psychological violence and intimidation rather than physical brutality and harassment.

Since 2010, cyberbullying has become more sophisticated regarding specific types of bullying behaviors. Through her research, Li (2010) ascertained a specific list of cyberbullying behaviors and their definitions. These behaviors include but are not limited to the following:

- *Flaming* is sending angry and offensive messages, harassment, and continual and repeated messaging of the same individual.
- *Cyberstalking* is harassment that includes threats or intimidation.
- *Denigration* involves sending cruel or untrue messages to others about an individual.
- *Masquerade* involves using a pseudonym to send cruel messages to others about an individual.
- *Outing and trickery* include sending private information or tricking someone into providing private information for the purpose of posting the information to humiliate an individual.
- *Exclusion* means intentionally excluding an individual from group interactions while using ICT devices (Li, 2010).

Impact

Erentaite and Bergman (2012) conducted a study about the impact of cyberbullying alongside traditional bullying to determine which is more devastating to individuals. To date, research on the harmful effects of bullying as opposed to cyberbullying is mixed; however, Ortega et al. (2012) found that the level of harm was dependent upon the type of bullying or cyberbullying inflicted. In their study of nearly 6,000 students from Spain, Italy, and England, secondary students responded that physical violence was more harmful than hurtful text messages, whereas the same students perceived humiliating photos and threats of violence as more harmful than verbal teasing or threats (Ortega et al., 2012). Feinberg and Robey (2009), however,

explained that cyberbullying can be so detrimental to the target that it exceeds the harm caused by traditional bullying due to the unceasing ability of an aggressor to attack a victim. Moreover, the target often does not know who the attacker is and may perseverate on the aggressor's identity (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

Utilizing a convenience sample of 92 university students in Bucharest, Tomsa, Jenaro, Campbell, and Neacşu (2013) found both cyberbullying and traditional bullying to have a devastating impact on individuals and a significant association with anxiety. Using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (Lovibond & Lovibond, as cited in Tomsa et al., 2013) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, as cited in Tomsa et al., 2013), they determined that students who reported being bullied through either method of targeting suffered from "high levels of social anxiety" (Tomsa et al., 2013, p. 589). However, they also condemned cyberbullying as more harmful than traditional bullying due to the endless observers cyberbullies can reach, as well as the continuing nature of physical documentation that can be viewed repeatedly by that audience (Tomsa et al., 2013).

During a cyberbullying event, not just the intended audience can access the e-mails, photos, or other denigrating documents. In a two-part study of over 17,500 students ages 14–18, participants from a large school district in British Columbia were questioned about how inappropriate ICT transmissions would be used and who would go online to look at the various communications (Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson, & Waterhouse, 2012). Law et al. (2012) found that the targets themselves often would go

online to rewatch, reread, or review the offending documents and would relive the hurtful experience, adding to the psychological impact of the event.

Gorzig and Frumkin (2013) carried out an extensive study to examine intensive cyberbullying, for example, when the behavior was raised to the level of flaming, denigration, or cyberstalking. Using a questionnaire to survey more than 25,000 students across 25 European countries, they chose a stratified random sample of children to interview. Approximately 1,000 children ages 9–16, representative of all 25 countries, were part of the interview stage of the study, which showed a significant link between cyberbullying and serious cases of depression and low self-esteem (Gorzig & Frumkin, 2013). Samer and Patchin (2011) also found that students who were targets of cyberbullying suffered from low self-esteem, poor grades, psychological and emotional problems, and even suicidal thoughts.

Price and Dalgleish (2010) also conducted research that indicated electronic aggression causes emotional harm and impacts student learning. Using a mixed methods design, Price and Dalgleish conducted a web-based survey that found 78% of 548 Australian youth and young adult participants, ages 10–25, indicated they had diminished self-esteem due to their cyberbullying experiences. The design included an anonymous online survey comprised of 18 questions, 16 quantitative and 2 qualitative in nature. In addition to self-esteem issues, 35% said that the harassment had impacted their grades, and 28% attributed poor school attendance to cyberbullying (Price & Dalgleish, 2010). Moreover, cyberbullying negatively impacted both the target and the aggressor, with consequences potentially lasting into adulthood. The aggressor of intensive cyberbullying

behavior was found to be at greater risk of exhibiting antisocial, violent, or even criminal behavior in adulthood, whereas targets of intensive attacks were found to have negative educational and relationship outcomes as well as impaired psychological health (Price & Dalgleish, 2010).

Perceptions

Cyberbullying perceptions have long-ranging differences between students, parents, and school personnel. Students feel that their acts of cyberbullying are not important or overly harmful. As students concluded in a repeated theme from one research survey, cyberbullying is "no big deal" (Li, 2010, p. 378). Students also perceive that they have nowhere to hide from their attackers and that they are helpless to stop it (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla, & Daciuk, 2012). In a voluntary pen-and-paper survey of 260 students from northeastern Ontario, Canada, Pettalia et al. (2013) found 94% of youth participants, ages 12–15, indicated they perceived cyberbullying to be harmful to peers. In spite of this, 75% of those students declared that there would be no serious consequences for the cyberbullies even if their behavior was reported to adults (Pettalia et al., 2013).

In a study directed at students identified as cyberbully victims, Sleglova and Cerna (2011) used semistructured interviews to gather the perceptions about their experiences of 15 students from the Czech Republic, 13 girls and two boys ages 14–18. Many of these students developed the perception of their cyber aggressor as someone who was socially dominant, while as the target, they felt socially subordinate (Sleglova & Cerna, 2011). When questioned about the social dynamics of their lives in the physical

world, these participants indicated they did not feel the same level of dominance from anyone outside of cyberspace (Sleglova & Cerna, 2011).

In another study, Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) organized 53 focus groups to gather student perspectives and understanding of what constituted cyberbullying. The 279 Belgian students who participated clearly indicated that they knew what defined cyberbullying, including the intent to cause harm, and had a general understanding that it was bullying carried out through the Internet. These students, aged 10–19, primarily felt that cyberbullying was wrong. However, they deemed cyberbullying acceptable when the target was a friend or former friend, whereas cyberbullying a "shy" or "strange" kid was mean and should not be done (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008, p. 501). As part of the study, students responded that they understood that cyberbullying was based on an imbalance of power by suggesting that the cyberbully was usually "stronger" and that the target was "weaker" while in cyberspace (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008, p. 501).

In a study of over 3,000 Australian students in Grades 6–12, Campbell, Spears, Slee, Butler, and Kift (2012) utilized voluntary school-based surveys to determine that students who were both cyberbullied and bullied through traditional means perceived that the physical bullying was worse but was over with quickly. These same individuals perceived that the cyberbullying had caused them more sadness and depression over time (Campbell et al., 2012). Despite clear indication that cyberbullying has a significant relationship with depressive symptomology, these targeted children perceived that adults cannot help them and equally that adults do not understand technology or the realities of

being on the Internet (Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman, & Eden, 2012). Sleglova and Cerna (2011) indicated that targets' perceptions of their parents' response to the cyberbullying would be to "overreact" (p. 11). Targets responded that this overreaction included calling the aggressor's parents, calling school authorities, or calling law enforcement, which was perceived as making the situation worse for the student (Sleglova & Cerna, 2011).

Another cyberbullying perception of students is that only girls get cyberbullied (Pettalia et al., 2013). In their study, Campbell et al. (2012) found more females admitted being cyberbullied than males, but males still reported being targets: 5.4% of females and 3.4% of males. Additionally, students expressed their belief that teachers are unaware of the cyberbullying that takes place during the school day (Slonje & Smith, 2008). The perceptions of parents about the topic of cyberbullying are significantly different from those of their children. Most parents responding to research questions believed they were cautious with their younger children as to their online activity, whereas teens indicated that they have relative freedom to Internet access and activity (National Crime Prevention Council, 2007).

Because parents often allow their younger children to access Facebook and other social networking sites, cyberbullying often occurs without the parent's knowledge. Preteens were found to be reluctant to tell adults about online activity for fear of losing their electronic privileges or because of the humiliation over things that were written (Snakenborg, Van Acker, & Gable, 2011). Snakenborg et al. (2011) also reported they found an increase in cyberbullying incidents during elementary school, indicating that these behaviors are filtering down from adolescent counterparts.

In many cases, parents are shocked to learn that their child was involved in cyberbullying and often attribute this type of activity to those children who may have reputations as school bullies (Sabella et al., 2013). Many parents perceive that their child's historical school behaviors would apply to their conduct in relation to ICT devices (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008). In their study of the prevalence of cyberbullying, Dehue et al. (2008) surveyed more than 1,200 last-year primary and 1st-year secondary students from the Netherlands, as well as the parents of these children. Dehue et al. reported that parents believed they could trust their children to adhere to online boundaries they set up, and that if their child were targeted, he or she would report the incident. In fact, 80% of parents signified that online rules had been set for their school-aged children. Further, less than 5% of the parents believed that their child was involved in cyberbullying behavior, whereas more than 17% of students admitted that they were aggressors while online. This disparity of data was true for targets of bullying as well, with 11% of parents expressing their knowledge of their child being cyberbullied versus the 23% of students who indicated experiencing cyberbullying (Dehue et al., 2008).

As in the case with parents, teachers often expect cyberbullies to be students identified as aggressors based on behavioral history and are surprised when an identified cyberbully is someone perceived to be a "kind and responsible" student (Sabella et al., 2013, p. 2707). In a study utilizing 66 high school teachers in an urban area in the western United States, teacher participants signified that because cyberbullying did not occur on school grounds they believed intervening in incidents of cyberbullying was a parent's or administrator's responsibility (Stauffer, Heath, Coyne, & Ferrin, 2012). In

Stauffer et al.'s (2012) study, no discipline policies or any type of standardized intervention strategies were in place for the school that included a plan for bullying or cyberbullying intervention.

In a study conducted with student teachers in Turkey, 69% of male and 85% of female participants expressed concern about cyberbullying in the public school setting, whereas only 54% of male and 48% of female participants felt confident in their capacity to intervene in bullying or cyberbullying behaviors (Yilmaz, 2010). In a separate study, Li (2008) surveyed student teachers in Canada and found over 65% perceived children were affected by cyberbullying. Only 13% agreed that they could adequately recognize cyberbullying, and 11% expressed confidence in their ability to manage the behavior (Li, 2008). Interestingly, only 4% of these preservice teachers acknowledged completing coursework for cyberbullying or bullying management (Li, 2008). Graves (2013) conducted a small study with middle school teachers who indicated they had a high level of technological understanding. All participants indicated the need for professional development regarding the methods for intervening in cyberbullying behavior.

Evidence and Statistics

Prevalence of victimization. The statistics for cyberbullying vary widely dependent upon the demographic data of the participant population, yet consistent themes have emerged. The value of this study is the investigation into the prevalence of cyberbullying. The numbers American students ages 12–18 who acknowledged being cyberbullied at some point in their lives ranged from 10% in the research of Hinduja and Patchin (2008) to 72% in the research of Juvonen and Gross (2008). Sabella et al. (2013)

suggested that most recent studies utilizing U.S. students, especially those within the past 5 years, have reported between 6% and 30% as the prevalence rate of cyberbullying. In contrast, researchers for the National Center for Education Statistics (Robers et al., 2013) found that 71% of American youth conceded to having been cyberbullied within the previous 12 months on at least one occasion.

Prevalence of aggression. Another statistic worth evaluating is the number of students who admit to utilizing cyberbullying behavior. These data ranged. In Hinduja and Patchin's (2008) study, 16% of girls and 18% of boys acknowledged having cyberbullied, supported by Sahin (2012), who found a bullying rate of 16% across genders. This percentage skyrocketed in the study by Pettalia et al. (2013) that found 50% of participants admitting to cyberbullying. Of this group, 90% indicated that they were targets of cyberbullying at some point in their lives.

Prevalence of reporting. Reporting data from cyberbullying targets were not collected in some of the cyberbullying studies. However, Slonje and Smith (2008) found that 50% of their cyberbullied participants never told anyone, 36% told a trusted peer, 9% told a guardian, and none had shared the information with a teacher or school official. Li (2007) stated that 34% of cyberbullied students reported being targeted to an adult and 35% of bystanders reported the abuse to an adult. These data are promising, but the question remains as to why the number is not even higher based on the fact that 67% of the participants in the study believed that adults would try to intervene if they were told about cyberbullying activity (Li, 2007).

Li's (2007) data have been contradicted by some other studies. Juvonen and Gross (2008) explained that 90% of cyberbully targets had never told an adult about their abuse. Hinduja and Patchin (2008) found that 14% of students told a parent or teacher about their cyberbullying experiences, and 41% told a friend, but 28% told no one at all. In a survey of all participant students, not simply those who acknowledged being cyberbullied, Cassidy et al. (2009) collected data that implied students would talk with an adult or school personnel if they were cyber targets. For those who would not report, the reasons were familiar themes; 30% thought the cyberbully would get revenge, 27% thought no one would help anyway, 24% felt their ICT freedoms would be restricted, and 20% thought they would be considered "rats" or "snitches" (Cassidy et al., 2009, p. 392). In Pettalia et al.'s (2013) study, 75% of participants believed that there would be minimal or no consequences for students found to be cyberbullies.

ICT accessibility data. The rising numbers of students who are reporting cyberbullying at the local level may be attributed to the increase in students with access to ICT devices. Li (2010) discovered that 90% of U.S. and 95% of Canadian students stated they had access to and used the Internet every day. Sahin (2012) found 97% of American students indicated they had daily access to the Internet. Juvonen and Gross (2008) established that over 94% of their participants had home access to the Internet. Over 98% of respondents in a study by Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) confirmed usage of the Internet, and 90% communicated possession of a personal cellular telephone.

Even in a large scale study completed in Australia across 29 schools with more than 3,100 students, 88% of the students had Internet access at home and 83% maintained

their own private cellular phone (Campbell et al., 2012). In the United Kingdom, 91% of students age 12 and over reported owning individual mobile phones (Slonje & Smith, 2008). Slonje and Smith (2008) recommended that cyberbullying research be conducted on younger students, as they found a significant increase in phone ownership in students as young as 8 years.

Potential harm data. Referring again to the Australian study by Campbell et al. (2012), 50% of participants perceived cyberbullying as being a harsh or very harsh way to treat others, and 30% believed that it greatly impacted their lives. Sleglova and Cerna (2011) explained that 34% of those who acknowledged being cyberbullied began to fear for their own safety. Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007) found that 93% of cyber targets experienced a negative impact from cyberbullying including sadness, hopelessness, depression, and anxiety. Price and Dalgleish (2010) seemed to confirm those data, with 78% of cyberbullied students sharing that their self-esteem was impacted, 35% feeling their grades were negatively affected, 28% avoiding school and having their attendance suffer, and 19% believing they experienced harm in their relationships with family members. Price and Dalgleish also focused on the feelings of targets and collected data that revealed 75% of the students felt sad, 58% were frustrated, and 48% were embarrassed. Cassidy et al. (2009) determined that 95% of their participants believed specific characteristics of an individual made them the principal target for cyberbullies. This included having a learning disability; being overweight; dressing or looking differently than the majority of peers; and even having artistic, academic, or athletic abilities that some may envy.

As mentioned earlier, students who are targets of bullying or cyberbullying often experience depressive feelings, anxiety, and low self-esteem; however, Kowalski and Limber (2013) found these exact characteristics are the precursors to becoming aggressors. This finding resulted in a separate impact category known as bully/victims. These are students who have taken part in bullying or cyberbullying as both the target and the aggressor. Studies have shown that students who suffer the greatest probability for maladjusted behaviors are students from this category (Lancioni, as cited in Kowalski & Limber, 2013). In fact, males who were both a cyberbully and a cyber target experienced the maximum intensity of suicidal ideation along with anxiety and depression, compared to both genders in all categories (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

Mishna et al. (2012, p. 63) concluded that the bully/victim category was the smallest and most "vulnerable" group in traditional bullying research. However, they discovered a higher likelihood that cyberbullies will also be cyber targets, and females had a higher propensity than males to act as bully/victims in the world of ICT devices. Many of these female bully/victims did not see themselves as cyberbullies due to their use of ICT devices to get revenge on those who had harmed them.

Anonymity data. When questioning students as to their perception of the identity of their cyber aggressor, Dehue et al. (2008) stated that at least 35% of the participants did not know who was attacking them. Li (2010) suggested that 40% of her participants had no idea who the cyberbullies were. Both Li (2008) and Campbell et al. (2012) found 50% of the students in their studies reported not knowing their attacker. Juvonen and Gross (2008) discovered that 73% of their participants were "pretty sure" (p. 501) they

knew who was targeting them. Hinduja and Patchin (2011) reported that only 31% of targets were sure who their aggressors were. Regardless of these data, the evidence is clear that the lack of specific knowledge as to one's attacker creates a heightened level of anxiety and fear for the target, as well as the belief that the aggressor will never be caught (Mishna, Saint, & Solomon, 2009).

School outcomes. Although cyberbullying behaviors tend to occur off of school property, mounting data suggest lives of students are significantly impacted by this behavior. For instance, of the targeted students who stated they had retaliated against their "presumed" aggressor, 60% did so while at school (Juvonen & Gross, 2008, p. 502). Juvonen and Gross (2008) also determined that 85% of middle school children who acknowledged being cyberbullied also reported being bullied at school on at least one occasion within the previous year. Didden et al. (2009) confirmed this statistic in their research. Tokunaga (2010) stated that as early as 2007, 35% of students reported being cyberbullied while online at school. Katzer, Fetchenhauer, and Belschak (2009) indicated a significant association between victimization online and victimization at school.

In many cases these cyberbullying aggressions actually begin at school and carry on after the school day is over. Roberts-Pittman et al. (2012) found that students had become increasingly more concerned with cyberbullying while at school due to the numbers of students who had begun texting and e-mailing from their cellular phones throughout the day. Cassidy et al. (2009) stated that, of the students who have cellular telephones, at least 40% indicated that they use them during the school day.

Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, and Purcell (2010) of the Pew Research Center reported the following statistics from random sampling of over 900 students across the nation:

- Nearly 60% of children ages 12–14 owned cellular phones.
- Over 80% of teens ages 15–17 owned cellular phones.
- Of cellular phone users ages 12–17, 88% used text messaging.
- Two out of three respondents used text messaging rather than calling.
- Seventy-five percent of teen cellular phone owners had unlimited texting capabilities.
- One in three teens sent 100 or more texts daily.
- One in three teens sent more than 3,000 texts monthly.

Lenhart et al. also found the following important school statistics:

- 12% of teens indicated there is no restriction on cellular phone use at school,
- 62% of teens indicated cellular phones are restricted only in class,
- 65% of teens indicated possession of cellular phones at school even when banned,
- 58% of teens text in class even at schools where cellular phone use is banned,
- 64% of teens text in class regardless of school rules, and
- 21% of teens receive and send e-mail on their cellular phones.

In some newly revised data from 2012, 1 out of 4 teens indicated they own a multimedia phone, a cellular telephone that also accesses the Internet with generally the same capacity as a computer (Lenhart, 2012).

Other school outcomes that are important to this study are the perceived or real impacts of cyberbullying on academic achievement and school attendance. Price and Dalgleish (2010) found a clear connection between cyberbullying and academic success, with 35% of their respondents receiving lower grades and 28% missing school due to fear of a cyberbully believed to be a classmate. Tokunaga (2010) explained that lower academic achievement can be connected to a cyber target's preoccupation with the cyberbully throughout the school day. Likewise, Snakeborg et al. (2011) found a consistent association between cyberbullying and poor grades, C or lower, as well as school truancy. Kowalski and Limber (2013) found a clear association between cyber victimization and low academic achievement as well as poor outcomes on standardized testing. Their study confirmed that targeted students did not like school and missed school as often as possible.

Differentiation Between Bullying and Cyberbullying

In a survey of 1,000 midwestern U.S. children in Grades 5–7, Low and Espelage (2013) established many parallels between typical nonviolent bullying and cyberbullying but also identified some differences. The authors, focusing on attitudes and experiences of the participants, determined that slightly more female students were involved in cyberbullying, whereas more male students participated in traditional bullying (threatening, taunting, and name calling). Low and Espelage also discovered that cyberbullying tended to occur more sporadically in the four schools they researched, as opposed to on-site bullying, which occurred with greater frequency. Family patterns of

violence and lack of parental monitoring were significant factors for students involved in both typical bullying and cyberbullying (Low & Espelage, 2013).

In a study with over 3,800 Swedish students ages 13–16, Beckman, Hagquist, and Hellstrom (2012) utilized the PsychoSomatic Problems Scale (Hagquist, as cited in Beckman et al., 2012) to measure the mental health of students impacted by cyberbullying and traditional bullying. Using a web-based questionnaire, in 2008 Hagquist (as cited in Beckman et al., 2012) had collected data that suggested bullying and cyberbullying rivaled one another on the mental and emotional impact of being either a target or an aggressor. The study clearly indicated that both bully and cyberbully targets felt sad, were depressed, and suffered from anxiety and worry. Also, both bullies and cyberbullies frequently expressed feelings of aggression and suffered from alcohol and drug use. Beckman et al. (2012) found psychosomatic health problems were equally present in both the bully and the cyberbully. They also found that those who were frequently bullied and then responded as bullies to others had the most significant impact on their mental health. Mental health concerns were also observed in cyberbullying targets turned aggressors.

Del Rey et al. (2012) stated that students who have acted as bully aggressors have a high predictability for becoming cyber aggressors, and students who have been traditional targets have a high probability of becoming cyber targets. In their study of suicide predictors, Hinduja and Patchin (2010) determined that both bully and cyberbully targets and aggressors share a higher probability for suicidal thoughts or attempted suicides. Additionally, the findings indicated that targets of both cyberbullying and

traditional bullying share feelings of loneliness, sadness, hopelessness, depressive tendencies, and lower self-worth. Wilton and Campbell (2011) found that both bullies and cyberbullies used aggressive behaviors to feel powerful and to get attention. Students from the same study who reported they were nonbullies stated that both bullies and cyberbullies were mean and that by hurting others they felt better about themselves.

Price and Dalgleish (2010) agreed with other scholars of traditional bullying that cyberbullying includes a disproportionate amount of power for the cyberbully against the cyber target. In cyberbullying, the target is intentionally harmed and likely repeatedly. These findings correlate with the definition of traditional bullying. For those who cyberbully but do not bully using traditional methods of face-to-face aggression, one of the key attractions was found to be the perception of anonymity (Price & Dalgleish, 2010). Interestingly, in one study (Juvonen & Gross, 2008), as many as 73% of targets indicating they were fairly certain they knew their aggressor.

State Cyberbullying Laws

Hinduja and Patchin began collecting research on cyberbullying in 2002 and in 2005 initiated a website to act as a clearinghouse for cyberbullying information, the Cyberbullying Research Center (2016). Hinduja and Patchin's (2016) *State Cyberbullying Laws: A Brief Review of State Cyberbullying Laws and Policies* reported that all 50 states have a formal bullying law at the state level. Only 23 states have incorporated cyberbullying into the law. Only 18 states have criminal sanctions against cyberbullying as part of state law, although 45 states have mandated school sanctions against cyberbullying as a part of local school policy. Although 14 states include off-

campus ICT behavior in their sanctions, only four of those states also have criminal sanctions against cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2016).

Due to earlier involvement with ICT devices, cyberbullying continues to escalate within the social cyber world of even younger children. The evidence is growing about psychological, emotional, and academic harm caused by cyberbullying. The literature review demonstrates the need to engage parents, teachers, and principals if cyberbullying is to be addressed in a comprehensive manner that will successfully impact student well-being and promote positive social change.

Implications

Research indicated that elementary school students tend to be in smaller school settings than their middle and high school counterparts, which makes most cyberbullies known to their targets (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Though the actual cyber attacks typically occur off school grounds, the proximity of the cyberbully to his or her target during the school day makes a social impact to school climate highly probable. Schools are at a crossroads where a decision must be made about the approach to take when dealing with cyberbullying (Diamanduros & Downs, 2011). Data from the study support the need for additional training for parents and students in the phenomenon of cyberbullying. As a result, the project developed from the study's data collection was a cyberbullying intervention plan specifically addressing the needs of elementary school students and their families. The design and content of that plan emerged from the data collected and the review of the literature.

Summary

The local problem addressed in the study was the ongoing presence of cyberbullying at BES, in spite of the adoption of a formal bullying prevention and intervention policy and the implementation of the Michigan Model for Health (Educational Materials Center, 2010), both implemented in 2010. Local Massachusetts principals are prohibited from intervening in cyberbullying events unless there is a known disruption to the educational day. However, the importance of this study centers on the evidence that cyberbullying has a significant impact on the learning environment; therefore, studying this issue at a primary level is warranted (MacNeil et al., 2009). The study could create social change by potentially minimizing the effects of cyberbullying on children and thereby impacting the level of violence that research has shown results from bullying (S. Paul et al., 2012).

The review of the literature provided a background for the characteristics and behaviors of cyberbullying. Section 2 of the study elaborates on the impact of cyberbullying through the lens of a mixed methods project study, defining and describing the perceptions of principals and the current knowledge of parents about the prevalence and effect of cyberbullying on their elementary school aged children.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The local problem investigated in the study was ongoing cyberbullying in a Massachusetts school district, even with a formal bullying policy implemented in 2010. The purpose of the study was to utilize a mixed methods design to examine cyberbullying among elementary age students through the perceptions of their campus principals and the knowledge level of their parents. Six research questions guided the study:

Qualitative:

RQ1: What are local elementary school principals' perceptions regarding the impact of off-campus cyberbullying on the in-school experiences of elementary school students who are involved in cyberbullying?

Quantitative:

RQ2: What are parents' perceptions of their children's computer and social media activities?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

$H_0 3$: There is no significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a3: There is a significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

RQ4: Is there a significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

H_04: There is no significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a4: There is a significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

RQ5: Is there a significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

H_05: There is no significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a5: There is a significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

RQ6: Is there a significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

$H_0$6: There is no significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a6: There is a significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

Section 2 examines the mixed methods design and provides logical reasoning as to why this design was the most appropriate for the study. A convergent or concurrent design was used to collect both qualitative focus group dialogue data, which were analyzed and coded, as well as quantitative parent survey data results that were compared to the qualitative implications for a deeper interpretation of the similarities and differences between the two participant groups. The participant groups are defined in this section along with the setting and demographics of the school district that served as the research site.

Research Design and Approach

The study employed a concurrent mixed methods design (Creswell, 2012). I used this type of design to gather qualitative data from principals about the impact of cyberbullying on students in school, as well as quantitative data from parents about their knowledge of their children's ICT usage frequency and social media selection trends. In

the qualitative sequence, a focus group of elementary school principals provided detailed information about each of their educational settings and the perceived cyberbullying activity. In the quantitative sequence, survey data were gathered to identify parent knowledge of cyberbullying behavior, social media activity, and available ICT devices held by local students. The approach was a parallel design in that two discrete data collection stages ran concurrently (Creswell, 2009). The purpose of the concurrent design was to have a transformative effect on the local schools because the theoretical perspective focused on advocacy for the purpose of change. The concurrent mixed methods design described by Creswell (2012) guided the study.

I deemed the mixed methods approach most appropriate due to the ability to collect both perceptions of participant experiences as well as statistical data. The qualitative data were collected through a focus group using discussion questions that sought opinions and observations of principals about the level and frequency of cyberbullying activity involving the students. Patton (2002) explained that the mixed methods design is most appropriate when seeking both statistical data and participant perceptions. In the case of this study, the perceptions and thoughts of the administrators involved were not attainable through statistical analysis. Thus, quantitative data were used to measure parent knowledge of cyberbullying activity, where Internet access was available to students, and what social media sites were utilized, by surveying parents of elementary students.

Creswell (2009) explained that a transformative study allows the researcher to gain an understanding of a phenomenon while gathering diverse perspectives. This is

done through two distinct data collection sequences. Quantitative data can be used to build additional understanding and explanation of the qualitative data in a mixed methods study (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Additionally, Creswell (2009) explained that a transformative study utilizes a theoretical lens to explore a problem, which made it an ideal choice for investigating the problem of cyberbullying. The theoretical lens of social cognitive theory was used to define cyberbullying activity of elementary students through the perceptions and opinions of principals and the activity that has been reported to the parents of these children.

Justification of Design

Lodico et al. (2010) indicated defining clear reasoning for a mixed method design must be based on the need for two specific data collection strategies. The justification for its use in the study was the need to supplement qualitative data from a small sample of campus principals with quantitative survey results from a large sample of parents to provide a more complete picture of the phenomenon of cyberbullying in the chosen elementary schools. Slonje and Smith (2008) found as few as 9% of their elementary school study participants had shared their cyberbullying experience with an adult. The highest number of reported incidents came from Li (2007), with 34% of elementary school student participants revealing the incident to an adult. The initial research question was used to determine principals' perceptions of the nature and extent of cyberbullying activity impacting their schools. The actual focus group questions were used to address the opinion of principals regarding the effectiveness of current policy and cyberbullying concerns. Because of the low reporting data, as noted earlier by Slonje and Smith, I

collected the qualitative data to answer the question about the impact of cyberbullying upon student life in the elementary schools studied. This information could not be gleaned from a statistical analysis of data, which made the qualitative sequence central to the study.

A quantitative design alone would have relied on simple objectivity of an analysis of statistical data (Lodico et al., 2010). Because statistical information of actual cyberbullying activity was limited, in addition to quantitative data, it was important to gather principals' insights about the cyberbullying activity that was perceived to occur within demographic educational facilities like that of the study school. Also, although parents might not have accurate data about the frequency with which their children are involved in cyber activity as a bystander, an aggressor, or a target, they are knowledgeable about the Internet access available to their children. This directly relates to Research Question 3 that asked about parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying*, and Research Question 4 that asked about their understanding of safety measures that could prevent cyber attacks on their children. Parents also often know which social media sites are being used and which ICT devices are available to the students. This helped to answer Research Question 2 about parents' perceptions of their children's computer and social media activities. These descriptive data shed light on the potential for cyber activity that may go unreported or unnoticed.

The statistical data about these important research questions were collected through the parent survey, which asked questions about computer and ICT devices that were independently available to children and how often parents had knowledge that their

children were using the Internet in unmonitored settings. The survey also asked parents to identify the social media accounts used by their children. Questions about parent knowledge of cyberbullying prevention and Internet safety measures answered Research Question 4. Parents were also asked to specify the level of involvement and training they would like the school to provide, which directly answered Research Questions 5 and 6.

The chosen design created an equal focus on both the qualitative data provided by principals and the quantitative data collected from parents. The purpose was that both sets of data provided development and expansion of the study problem (Bryman, 2008). A qualitative method was preferred because principals had frequency information based on cyberbullying reports made from parents; students; and, on occasion, teachers. Additionally, principals had specific information about the outcomes of cyberbullying investigations, based on the 2010 BES Suspension Record. A similar qualitative approach was considered for the collection of parent data as well. An open forum, however, would not have allowed parents to answer questions anonymously and could have made parents feel vulnerable when providing their feedback. Individual interviews could not have provided anonymity for parents either and could have limited the validity of the data if they felt uncomfortable acknowledging their need for cyber training or disclosing a lack of cyber safety knowledge. Through a quantitative survey, parents anonymously shared their concerns and their interests in potential training opportunities. It was important to learn of parent interest in cyber safety training, as some research has shown that students typically have more knowledge and understanding of cyber technology than their parents (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). The triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data

could show how the school can best confront the issue in the most positive and proactive manner possible. Through the qualitative and quantitative data, the study could make a positive social impact at the local level, and possibly beyond, by informing a social media instructional curriculum tool directly targeted at the identified concerns.

Once I determined that a mixed methodology was most beneficial to the study, I then investigated which specific design should be used. An explanatory sequential design was considered, which would begin with a quantitative sequence followed by a qualitative sequence. The qualitative sequence would then provide findings allowing me to determine what extent the qualitative data supported the quantitative data, which would be derived from a much larger population (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Hesse-Biber (2010) explained that the qualitative support for the quantitative statistical data would increase generalizability. However, because a quantitative sequence would not show a general picture of the problem of cyberbullying because of the tendency for children not to report cyberbullying activity, these data would have been limited. When there is a limitation factor in data collection, these data cannot act as a major foundation of a study (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Additionally, the qualitative data provided by principals would not be able to be used to refine the quantitative data provided by parents because the parent survey identifies parent technology understanding rather than cyberbullying perceptions.

Another mixed methods approach that was considered but rejected was the exploratory sequential design, which uses the qualitative sequence as the primary component to develop a theory about a problem (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Conducting a

qualitative focus group of principals as the first sequence of this study would have provided a foundation for the perceptions about cyberbullying in the local elementary schools; however, the quantitative data collected from parents in the second sequence would not refine or extend the qualitative findings because of the specificity of the survey questions about ICT activity rather than cyberbullying. These two distinct types of data would not naturally merge into a cohesive understanding of cyberbullying in the local schools. Bryman (2008) explained that it is often difficult to mix or merge the two types of data, qualitative and quantitative, in support of one another because of the different questions that were often answered by each.

Finally, an embedded design was considered because of the simultaneous nature of this mixed methods design. Hesse-Biber (2010) explained that this nested or embedded design does allow for concurrent collection of both qualitative and quantitative data and the use of each sequence to answer different questions. The problem with this design was that either the qualitative sequence or the quantitative sequence would need to take center stage as the primary form of data (Creswell, 2012). In this case I determined that both principals' perceptions and parents' knowledge were of equal importance. In the study, these two data sets are different in nature but of equal importance in identifying the problem of cyberbullying and a viable solution to address the issue through the collaborative support of both school and home. After each of these designs was considered, the final decision to use the convergent parallel design was made based on the equal importance of both sources. Bryman (2008) described the strength of a design that used both perceptions and statistical analysis for data collection. Because of this, the

study used questions that called on participants to offer opinions, observations, and ideas, as well as questions that were statistical in nature.

Data Collection Strategy

The data collection for the study used a convergent parallel design, meaning that both the qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently and analyzed separately to build a full understanding of the problem (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Bryman (2008) explained that the point of this type of study is to use the data collected from both research sequences to bring reciprocal corroboration between the pair without weighing the importance of one over the other. Hesse-Biber (2010) offered that this type of mixed methods design can add another layer of validity to the overall outcomes of the study.

I obtained the qualitative data through the open-ended questioning of four local principals during a focus group. The emphasis of the qualitative sequence was on the perceptions of these principals about the impact of cyberbullying upon student life of elementary students at their schools. The focus group took place on June 8, 2015, during a monthly elementary principals' meeting and was the primary focus of the agenda. The location of the focus group discussion was the conference room of the school scheduled to hold the monthly principals' meeting.

Concurrently, collection of quantitative data concerning parent knowledge of cyber activity, social networking activity, and ICT device usage took place through the use of a parent survey. This survey was presented and responses collected electronically using the SurveyMonkey tool provided through the district subscription. The survey instrument, modified from the Use and Abuse of the Internet Among Middle School

Children Parent Survey (Rowe, 2008), can be found in Appendix C. Permission to use and modify the survey is presented in Appendix D.

Data Analysis and Integration

The analysis of the qualitative data collected from the focus group began with listening to the session recording, which was then transcribed. Glesne (2011) stated that the creation of an open coding document supports understanding of a panel discussion whenever a transcript of an interview is made; therefore, I followed that protocol for this study. The transcript was used to create a broad categorization of any overarching themes that developed throughout the discussion. After listening to the audio-recorded session, I took additional notes on more specific comments and ideas that emerged. The merging of specific comments into a master list of categories obtained from the transcript can lend clarity to overarching themes (Merriam, 2009). The recording was also compared to the final transcript to ensure the accuracy of content. The data were color coded to build a relational framework that, once evolved, was distributed into categories. Before triangulating the qualitative and the quantitative data, I reduced the number of categories to be directly linked to the qualitative research question. Condensing the number of categories ensures that the included codes are relevant to each category (Merriam, 2009).

Data collected from the surveys to answer Research Question 2 were analyzed descriptively using measures of central tendency, and as recommended by Hoy (2010), focused on both mean and median. For Research Questions 3–6, I analyzed responses to Survey Questions 15–20 using chi-square tests. These results were calculated using SPSS

software analysis. I used general tendencies, as described by Green and Salkind (2011), to make inferences about the local parent population.

Hesse-Biber (2010) described the importance of having both types of data inform a study but also how integration can be decided by what best answers the research problem. Hesse-Biber also recommended the integration of the data after interpreting the qualitative data for themes separately from the analysis of the quantitative data. I followed this advice and completed both sequences before I compared the coded themes from the qualitative data with the findings resulting from the analysis of the quantitative data. I used identified relationships to draw conclusions about the extent and concern of the problem of cyberbullying in the study schools, as well as the grade levels to target for potential intervention. This type of information allowed for the identification of commonalities among these data, which strengthens a study (Creswell, 2012). Identification of common themes in this study also supported the project creation.

Setting and Sample

The mixed methods study used principals of four local elementary schools, $N = 4$, and parents from five independent elementary schools, $N = 162$, which form a regionalized district that supports a single junior high school for Grades 7–8 and a senior high school for Grades 9–12. All five towns are rural in nature with minimal industry or commercial support. Local industry numbers are too low to be recorded by the U.S. Census Bureau. Schools are primarily funded through the tax base of local citizens. School-choice funds are also utilized in three of the five schools to support capital expenses. Table 1 displays demographic data about the size of the various schools, the

rural nature of the student population, and the level of education and income levels achieved by the various schools' communities.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Local Elementary Schools

School	Town pop.	Student pop.	Race %			Median household income	% high school diploma	% bachelor's degree or higher	Principal tenure
			White	Hispanic	Other				
A	6,200	952	90	5	1	$83K	95	30	1 year
B	3,600	328	98	1	1	$80K	92	34	7 years
C	3,400	319	93	3	4	$62K	93	24	10 years
D	2,500	232	94	3	3	$69K	92	29	4 years
E	1,500	150	84	7	9	$61K	93	20	15 years

Note. All schools serve prekindergarten through Grade 6; School C is the study school. Data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2010. Principal tenure data from 2016.

In Table 1, the total student population is identified as approximately 2,000 children. The high school graduation rate for each of the communities indicates a strong commitment to education. Principal tenure is high in that it shows a length of service that would allow for an established and supported school culture and climate. Only one school had a new principal, due to a FY2014 retirement.

The focus group included principals from the four schools where I am not the principal. I recruited parents from all five schools through each school's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) at a regularly scheduled monthly meeting. I discussed the survey information at each of the meetings and provided the URL link to access the parent survey. I explained the survey procedures and the importance of the electronic consent form. I gave parents the opportunity to ask clarifying questions and explained that they

must complete the electronic consent form to begin the survey. As an additional recruitment strategy, I posted the parent survey and the procedural details in each school's electronic newsletter during the month of June 2015. These newsletters only go to parents and guardians in each of the five schools. In order to achieve the best potential response rate, I asked to have the survey information included in the school newsletters over a 3-week period. Because of the size difference between the schools, from 150 students at the smallest school to over 900 students at the largest, I anticipated a wide variation in participation. I set the goal of 200 total parent surveys to be collected for comparison of parent ICT knowledge within the district schools (approximately 10% of the total student population). By seeking this number of parent participants, I hoped to minimize sampling error, meaning that if all 1,981 union families returned surveys rather than just the 10% response rate, the surveys would not result in an extreme statistical variance as described by Creswell (2012).

I based the sample size strategy on principals' information of the five PTO groups averaging 15–25 attendees at their monthly meetings. By personally attending each meeting, I encouraged members to endorse participation in the survey with one to two additional parents, making the target number of 200 attainable. Although I did not receive 200 qualifying surveys, I completed the data analysis with the 162 surveys that were received for a response rate of 81%. I used these surveys to analyze Survey Questions 3–14, which directly related to Research Question 2. Because some parents included more than one child on their surveys, I excluded all surveys that reflected children from both the Grades K–3 and Grades 4–6 categories from Survey Questions 15–20, which directly

answered Research Questions 3–6. I analyzed these research questions with the 147 qualifying parent surveys. SurveyMonkey did not collect addresses, phone numbers, or names along with each computer's IP address, which provided anonymity for participants. Each participant was asked to complete an online consent form in order for the survey to become accessible (SurveyMonkey, 2014).

Concurrent Strategy

The study used both qualitative and quantitative data to answer the research questions regarding principals' perceptions of cyberbullying activity and parent knowledge of Internet and social media activity of local elementary school students. Both data sets were collected simultaneously but were analyzed separately. I triangulated these data sets to provide a convergence of all data. This convergence allowed for a more complete understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2012).

Qualitative Sequence

The qualitative sequence was grounded in a focus group conducted with four local elementary school principals. I conducted the qualitative focus group session in the spring of 2015 during a monthly elementary principals' meeting. I made an audio recording of the session in order to ensure I accurately understood the implications of individual responses and the nuances of the discussion. Glesne (2011) explained that a focus group allows the researcher an inclusive view due to the participants having various perceptions of related experiences. Utilizing an open-ended broad topic discussion, the responses from this part of the study established the depth of the cyberbullying concern in

the local district. I analyzed the qualitative data and coded for themes, which are described in the qualitative findings.

Five broad topics were developed through the lens of the complexities of cyberbullying as a phenomenon rather than developing theory regarding cyberbullying. The broad topics included the increase in ICT accessibility and protocols of ICT devices while on campus, the perceived impact of cyberbullying on in-school peer relationships, the effectiveness of the current bullying policy in each school in dealing with cyberbullying, concerns held by teachers and parents pertaining to cyberbullying as perceived by the principals, and the information and strategies that should be included in a social curriculum targeting cyberbullying (Appendix E). Along with open-ended dialogue, clarifying questions were used to seek a greater depth of interpretation for these data. Merriam (2009) described this type of discussion as one in which the interviewer can interpret what the interviewees have stated and then gather reactions from the participants. In addition, I developed a confidentiality agreement for focus group participants (Appendix F).

Access to participants. Because meetings with elementary principals are already scheduled at monthly intervals, one meeting was used to conduct a focus group session on cyberbullying. On the afternoon of June 8, 2015, I met with district elementary principals with a predetermined agenda, approved by the superintendent, specifically allowing me the opportunity to facilitate an administrator's response session to the five themes and dialogue that came from opening questions. No prior agenda had been set for this session because all other leadership responsibilities were completed for the school

year. The session took place at one of the four elementary schools other than the study school in order to allow the administrators to feel that they were on neutral ground. A letter of cooperation with the union has been provided in Appendix G. A consent form was signed by each of the four elementary school principals.

Data collection procedures. Spaulding (2008) described the importance of setting discussion protocols before entering into a dialogue with panels or focus groups. With that in mind, I followed that procedure when facilitating the principal focus group. With participant permission, I made a recording of the focus group session. This allowed me to concentrate on the task of facilitating the focus group rather than taking notes. I asked members of the panel to provide at least 1.5 hours to have a full discussion about the topic of cyberbullying. I explained to the panel members that there would be five broad topics of conversation and the importance of gaining input from each member of the focus group before moving from one topic to the next. Additionally, I explained that focus group members' perceptions and opinions provided the data for the qualitative sequence of the study, and specific examples of cyberbullying activity would be reported as supporting evidence for the insights from the session. No identifiers have been used to indicate who made individual comments, and data were cleansed of all distinguishing characteristics. Finally, I assured the participants of complete confidentiality for participants in the presentation and discussion of research findings.

Researcher–participant relationship. Because the focus group included collaborative professionals who have worked together successfully before the focus group, a collegial relationship was already in place that allowed us to speak openly and

honestly when brainstorming problems and issues in the past. Also, the fellow principals were at the same supervisory status as I, and I held no administrative authority over anyone in the group. Before conducting the focus group, a clear description of the researcher's role was defined for the participants and a reminder of the consent form information was stated. As recommended by Glesne (2011), I reminded the participants of the procedures as explained in the consent form and that the researcher's role is separate from that of a fellow principal.

Triangulation of data collected. The qualitative data were analyzed and coded for themes, which I triangulated with the quantitative data to construct inferences based on the concurrent data. Although this was a simultaneous collection of data, the triangulation occurred after collecting both types of data and evaluating them separately. This allows an equal priority to be given to both sets or data (Creswell, 2012). Using this process adds clarity to a study and provides additional information (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Role of researcher. As a colleague of the participants of the focus group, I have had multiple opportunities in monthly elementary principals' meetings to discuss candidly various sensitive topics. Each member of the group has worked as a principal of a unique district, sharing the same regional superintendent. One member of the group and I had worked together for over 9 years. A third principal had worked with the group for 6 years, and the fourth had been in place for 3 years. The newest member just joined our team 9 months ago and as a veteran principal has added information from former experiences. This collegial connection is the only role and relationship I share with the members of this panel. A collaborative, confidential didactic exchange is typical for the

group. For the study, however, I acted only as a facilitator of the overarching discussion cultivated from the five broad topics described. This procedure is found to be most useful in interviewing those who have established relationships (Glesne, 2011).

Due to cyberbullying events experienced in the local school with the identified problem, all focus group questions required neutral language and nonemotional inflection to ensure that my experiences as principal of the study school did not create an atmosphere for exaggerated discussion. Remaining neutral, especially when personal experiences could escalate responses, is imperative (Lodico et al., 2010). I intentionally made no indication that cyberbullying had occurred in the school I lead or that an increase in ICT devices provided alternate opportunities for cyberbullying activity. All responses from the participants received equal discussion time regardless of similarities or differences between participant experiences and those of the study school. Glesne (2011) recommended that all responses be coded and reported as part of the study data. I followed this procedure; however, although I recorded unconnected and extraneous responses, they were not included in the findings.

Quantitative Sequence

The quantitative sequence of the mixed methods study employed a survey for parents of the five local elementary independent schools that comprise a union in Massachusetts. Because the electronic survey ensured that all parent responses remained anonymous, I invited parents from all five schools to participate, including the school where I am principal. The target date for the quantitative parent survey to be electronically available for families was spring of 2015, via a survey link embedded in

each school's electronic parent newsletters. The entire district represents approximately 2,000 students, and I sought a 10% return rate from the parents of those children for an expected return of 200 surveys. The purpose of the survey was to provide specific information from parents about the access of ICT devices and social media usage by local elementary aged students. The survey included 20 multiple-choice questions that required selection of simple descriptive answers to gather parent knowledge of cyber activity involving their children (Appendix C). The survey also allowed parents to provide a final statement describing any additional information or experiences they would like to share. With each administrator's permission, all parents in each school were sent the electronic survey link through their electronically received school newsletters. These newsletters were sent through parent e-mails and did not require the creation of a new electronic database. Each school's PTO also supported the recruitment of parent participants. By asking to be included on the PTO agenda for each school, I was able to share a sample survey and explain the steps for taking the survey.

Description of instrumentation. With permission of the original survey's author**,** I modified the survey instrument from a prior study (Rowe, 2008). The original survey was based on cyberbullying research with both children and adolescents, which included a panel review of 36 experts from academic, health, and cyber safety backgrounds (McQuade & Sampat, 2008). The survey, formerly titled Use and Abuse of the Internet Among Middle School Children, is now titled Elementary School Cyber Technology Parent Survey. The modified survey has maintained the 20-question format and kept an open-response feedback option following the last question. I altered the questions that

directly related to student grade levels and updated Internet websites and social media sites most relevant to today's students. Changes are sometimes needed to adapt existing surveys to connect with the specific problem or population of the study (Thompson, 2014). The author provided written permission to use and modify the survey (Appendix D). The modified survey can be found in Appendix C. The original author used the survey to collect descriptive data based on parent knowledge and understanding. The survey purpose remained consistent in this study.

The concepts measured by the survey directly related to the research questions targeted in the quantitative sequence, specifically the knowledge of parents about cyber safety and social media usage by their elementary aged children and parent interest in school-provided cyber training for these two areas of importance. Research Question 2 was addressed by Survey Questions 3–14. Research Question 3 was informed by Survey Questions 15–17. Research Question 4 was answered by Survey Question 18. Research Question 5, the critical question of parent training interest, was answered through Survey Question 20, and Research Question 6 was addressed by Survey Question 19. Survey Questions 1 and 2 were used to define the demographic data of the children represented in the participating families.

Frequency distributions of answers were utilized to determine central tendency measures for the survey questions targeting demographic information. This type of analysis was described as the most fundamental when interpreting quantitative data (Fink, 2009). The distribution included the mean and median for each question utilizing descriptive data. For the last five questions, statistical tests were used to determine if

there were significant differences between parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6. Because chi-square testing can draw conclusions about a study population, it was chosen for this study (Hoy, 2010). In this case, the collected data allowed me to draw conclusions about the current level of parent knowledge and desire for school-based training.

The SurveyMonkey program was used to collect data from the parent survey and contained an informed consent section. The survey and informed consent were accessible by a link sent electronically through parent newsletters. Parents were asked to click on the link to access the informed consent. After parents reviewed the survey and indicated informed consent through a click box, they were then able to click an acceptance box that allowed them to begin the survey. After finishing all 20 questions, there was an optional open-ended question that had a submit button below it for parents to complete the survey (SurveyMonkey, 2014). The statistical data collected from the surveys completed by parents were analyzed using SPSS software. The data are organized in frequency tables and chi-square tables because they describe and explain the research results (Green & Salkind, 2011).

Data Analysis and Validation Procedures

Creswell (2009) explained the importance of researchers providing an accurate interpretation of the data. He recommended some strategies for both qualitative and quantitative data when using a mixed methods design. Using both methods of data collection allowed for open discussion of current issues and potential concerns through a

dialogue forum and gathered private and candid responses through anonymous surveys (Glesne, 2011).

Analysis within the qualitative approach. A discussion model formed the basis of the qualitative sequence, which allowed for disagreement in perceptions or experiences within a particular theme by individual principals. I directed the conversation toward an in-depth reflective analysis of building-based cyberbullying, and I elicited various perspectives following a strategy recommended by Glesne (2011). For a study to have the potential for positive social change, the findings must have validity for the reader and the reader and researcher must have confidence in the procedure for collecting and coding all of the qualitative data (Merriam, 2009). I organized and coded the qualitative data into specific themes based on the descriptive information I collected. I then identified and defined the emergent themes in a narrative. Finally, I analyzed the findings alongside the known information obtained from the literature review as well as any surprises that arose from the coded data.

Integration of data. Because the study was concurrent in design, I collected the quantitative data through the SurveyMonkey website during the same time frame, June 2015, in which I conducted and coded the qualitative data. The survey data were analyzed and tables created to provide an overall picture of the results, and I firmly established narrative themes from the qualitative findings. Waiting until both sets of data are analyzed allows the researcher to draw final conclusions (Merriam, 2009). For this reason, at this point the two sets of data were compared and triangulated to consider recurring themes among the data.

Validation procedures. After completing coding of the qualitative themes, I used member checking strategies with the focus group participants as described by Merriam (2009), which ensured transcription validity of the responses. Before any analysis of the qualitative data, I e-mailed the transcripts to the focus group panel for member checking to ensure there were no unclear details or aspects of the discussion. All participants replied, two through e-mail and two through phone calls, that they agreed that the transcript adequately presented their dialogue. Following my preliminary analysis of the data, I again e-mailed the emergent themes and understanding of the discussion implications for examination by the participants to ensure an accurate interpretation of the dialogue. I called each principal to get feedback regarding the themes that I found to ensure I documented their individual ideas and concerns in the file I sent. Only one principal indicated concern that the initial data did not clearly identify that individual's perceived concern that cyberbullying is impacting that school. I clarified this principal's perception to indicate that cyberbullying is affecting that particular school and classrooms. This principal clearly agreed that this was the perception. Discrepant data were coded and considered within the findings regardless of the rarity of particular perceptions or experiences.

Analysis within the quantitative approach. Data from the survey were analyzed descriptively to answer Research Question 2. I used SPSS software to create reports based on the data collected electronically through SurveyMonkey during the survey window. I kept the survey window open for approximately 1 month and continued having principals and parents promote the survey link through their PTO and school-based

communications. I followed the data daily to watch for adequate participation. At the completion of the district-provided 1-month collection period, I had received 162 survey returns. The window closed on June 26, which was the 1st week of the district's summer vacation. Because parents would not be easily accessible again until September, I determined that the 81% participation rate would provide acceptable results and did not request a survey extension from the district. Using SurveyMonkey reporting features allowed me to create spreadsheets of the survey responses and to create percentage tables of the descriptive data. These data included the computation of mean, median, and standard deviation as recommended by Hoy (2010). Research Questions 3–6 were analyzed using chi-square tests.

Protection of Participants' Rights

Principals participating in the focus groups were somewhat vulnerable to having their responses attributed to their individual schools due to the small number of participants. When describing their narrative responses, aliases were assigned to interviewees to maintain the confidentiality of the focus group members. Creswell (2009) recommended that researchers disassociate names from interview responses at the point where data are coded and recorded. Also, the focus group participants were asked to sign an informed consent document describing the study; the researcher's goals and purposes of the study; and the participants' rights before, during, and after their interactions with the researcher. The agreement included a signature section that required participants to agree to keep all information shared during the session confidential after the discussion had ended (see Appendix F).

Protection of survey participant identities occurred by using the electronic SurveyMonkey link. The link allowed participants to anonymously complete the survey because the parent newsletter arrived in each parents' e-mail with the link to the survey embedded in the newsletter itself. The actual survey was not sent directly to any parent or family e-mail addresses. Parents who chose to participate needed to type the URL link into the browser or click on the link from the electronic newsletter. The survey was accessible from any computer with Internet capabilities. Parents did not provide specific identifiers of themselves or their children other than student grade level and gender within the online SurveyMonkey format of the survey. Participants received assurance of the complete anonymity of their survey responses and that sensitive information would be treated respectfully. An electronic consent form preceded each survey to ensure that each participant understood the survey procedures. For the survey to continue, these procedures had to be accepted.

Before any communication with the participants or collection of data, I submitted all documentation to Walden University's Institutional Review Board for approval to begin the research sequence of the study. I petitioned the superintendent of schools for a Letter of Cooperation to begin the active research and the utilization of the union's SurveyMonkey account (Appendix G). I placed all data and documentation into two folders marked Qualitative Sequence and Quantitative Sequence and locked the files in my home office. I will keep these data for a minimum of 5 years.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this concurrent mixed methods study was to determine the impact of cyberbullying among students of four rural elementary schools through (a) the perceptions of the building principals and (b) parents' knowledge of students' cyber activity. This determination was accomplished by conducting a qualitative focus group with all four principals and by using a parent survey with 20 multiple-choice quantitative questions and a concluding optional open-ended question. The following research questions guided the study:

Qualitative:

RQ1: What are local elementary school principals' perceptions regarding the impact of off-campus cyberbullying on the in-school experiences of elementary school students who are involved in cyberbullying?

Quantitative:

RQ2: What are parents' perceptions of their children's computer and social media activities?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

$H_0 3$: There is no significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a3: There is a significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

RQ4: Is there a significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

H_04: There is no significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a4: There is a significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

RQ5. Is there a significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

H_05: There is no significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a5: There is a significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

RQ6. Is there a significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6?

$H_0$6: There is no significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a6: There is a significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

Qualitative Findings

To answer Research Question 1 regarding local elementary school principals' perceptions of the impact of off-campus cyberbullying on the in-school experiences of elementary school students who are involved in cyberbullying, the elementary principals' focus group questions centered around five broad topics. Each topic netted important information that led to an overview of the impact of cyber activity and ICT access of students both at home and while at school. Also, principals' ideas of potential cyber support for parents and students informed the direction of the final project designed to support all families in their knowledge and understanding of cyber safety. The five major themes that emerged to answer Research Question 1 were (a) school rules about personal technology devices, (b) cyberbully reporting impact, (c) classroom impact, (d) policy impact, and (e) instructional impact. Two additional subthemes that arose were student training and parental impact.

School Rules About Personal Technology Devices

The first theme that emerged was that all schools represented by the focus group principals had specific rules about the use of personal Internet technology devices while at school. Principals felt that although these rules impacted the school day by resulting in regular adverse interactions with students, they were necessary because cyberbullying had increased. Principals had observed an increase in personal technology devices carried by elementary aged students since the implementation of the 2010 Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan mandated by the MADESE (2010a). All four principals reported a sharp increase in the number of students carrying personal ICT devices to school since 2010. One principal reported that students as young as third grade were found to be carrying a cellular phone, and another described confiscating a cellular telephone from a kindergarten student. Three of the four principals explained that impact often occurred to the school day because their school rules required them to confiscate all personal ICT devices—primarily cellular telephones—if they were observed outside of a student's backpack while at school. Only one principal stated, "Our kids are respectful of the rule to keep cellular phones put away during the school day." Moreover, one principal communicated that students were allowed the use of personal e-readers at school.

All principals agreed that cyber technology impacted students while being transported by bus to and from school, which was still considered part of the school day. Two principals felt that this activity was appropriate, whereas two felt that the impact was negative and harmful. All reported that students were using personal ICT devices on the school bus. Usage included cellular telephones and Internet-accessible personal

entertainment devices such as iPods and iPads. Three of the principals indicated that school rules prohibited the use of ICT devices on the bus, but monitoring the devices while on the school bus was problematic and impossible for drivers to supervise. The fourth explained that students had permission to utilize their devices while on the bus. Two of the principals felt that students were not utilizing the devices appropriately while on the bus. Two principals determined that their students were typically using their devices appropriately; a third stated, "If the child is using a phone appropriately, I would rather him or her use the phone than other inappropriate things that may happen."

One of the principals expressed concern that increased cyber accessibility was a direct link to the cyber problems that were impacting the school. One principal stated,

> I feel we are inheriting the cyberbullying problems from the high school, which first trickled down to junior high and has now made its way down to the elementary schools. Primarily this is happening with my fifth and sixth grade and is directly related to the accessibility of technology.

Another principal agreed, adding, "It is impossible, and it is also contradictory to try to eliminate technology outside of the classroom when we are finding ways to use technology all day, every day [in the classroom]." The final principal reported that students were permitted access to cyber chat with book buddies through a web-based software program, Destiny. The pattern that emerged during this discussion was that the more restrictive the school environment, the more inappropriate the students' cyber activity, both within and outside of the school setting. Those students with the most freedom seemed most adherent to their school's cyber rules and parameters. Students

who were the most restricted in their school settings seemed most likely to break ICT restrictions.

Cyberbullying Reporting Impact

The next theme that emerged was that cyberbullying was directly impacting time on learning and the school day. Principals reported receiving cyberbullying reports during the school day from parents, students, and teachers. Because of the escalating number of reports, all four principals perceived that time spent on learning in school was being impacted by cyberbullying outside of school. Also, peer relationships within their schools were perceived as becoming strained and often led to principals having to take an active role in disciplining student behavior directly linked to cyber activity. For instance, one principal explained, "I have dealt with a number of instances where students are showing me pictures of texts from other children who are being mean. Then parents get involved and it becomes a huge problem that impacts the school day." Another principal added, "We also see cyber activity trickling into the school from Facebook and from some other social media that we don't even know about." One principal explained, "I have seen students bringing to school issues that have happened at home over the weekend."

All four principals concluded that there is a cyberbullying problem that impacts the social well-being of students in their schools. Three of the principals felt that their primary concern was with students in Grades 5 and 6, whereas the last determined that the problem was with students in Grades 4, 5, and 6. All four principals reported that the primary offenders were female, with only one principal indicating some instances of male cyberbullying activity.

When asked how gender plays into the impact of cyberbullying during the school day, female cyber attacks were perceived as most common by three of the four principals. Two principals described this as “mean-girl” activity. Parents typically reported this behavior and often presented the principals with offending e-mails and pictures of text messages. Facebook, an online social media site, was described by one of the principals as the method most often reported as being used by the cyber aggressor. Some of the students used exclusionary language and attempted to prohibit friendships with the cyber target. The principals described disruptive behavior that often would filter into the school setting through arguments during the school day in classrooms or during lunch and recess. When asked about the reported male activity, one principal stated, “The boys are on X-Box Live, and they end up trash talking each other on the playground based on this activity.”

Classroom Impact

Another major theme arose from two principals who observed students showing signs of depression while in their classrooms. This behavior was brought to the principals’ attention by teachers who found that students were communicating self-injurious behavior to friends through social media sites. This communication often took the form of pictures, as well as other text-based cyber communications of self-injurious behavior. Both of these principals witnessed physical injuries or saw cyber pictures of female students who had cut or scratched themselves and shared this information with friends. One principal commented,

> We have a lot of upper level grade [Grades 5 and 6] kids going for shock value of posting pictures of themselves with scratches and cuts or holding a knife up in an Instagram picture. Kids will report that to teachers, who then have to refer students to another level of support.

Classrooms are impacted again as students are then sent from the instructional environment to receive additional support. This principal continued by explaining, "My school psychologist will do a safety assessment but then just give it back to the parents to deal with." This self-injurious behavior provides additional evidence that off-campus cyber behavior impacts time that school personnel could be using for other student needs. Both principals communicated that they utilized their school psychologists to perform a threat assessment of these students and then shared the information with parents regardless of the assessment outcome.

Three of the principals reported a concern about cyber activity based on their observations to date. One principal felt that social media was the cause of students beginning dangerous behaviors, specifically self-injurious behaviors, by what they witnessed from peers who demonstrated the same behaviors. One principal provided a different concern by stating,

> The parents often have excuses for their child's behavior and often attribute it to a friend who is angry with their child, rather than a friend who is really just concerned. These are cries for help, and we have to share with a parent whether they want to listen or not.

When discussing the discipline of students involved in cyberbullying or cyber activity, all principals acknowledged that they informed parents of any viable information they ascertained. The only time any of the principals became involved in disciplining student behavior was when it continued within the school setting, although one principal stated, “Regardless of where the problem originates, if it is impacting a student’s school day, I feel I have to take an active role.” Another principal followed this comment by explaining, “We speak with the students and we inform the parents. We own it.” This administrative involvement is further indication that cyberbullying is affecting the school day by impacting school resources, time for learning, and social well-being.

Policy Impact

The fourth major theme that emerged was that mandated state and local policy changes had impacted every student’s school day by setting new guidelines about bullying and cyberbullying activity. The district’s bullying policy had been changed in 2010 based on bullying and cyberbullying events, which occurred on a state and national level. The overwhelming response from all four principals was that the policy impacted the in-school experience of students by mandating additional time be spent in educating students about bullying with formal instructional materials. Students involved in cyberbullying would now be brought to the attention of administrators when any type or report was made regarding bullying or cyberbullying activity. Also, the policy changes created a foundation for principals to know how to respond to this activity. Two of the principals felt that the policy clearly defined the parameters for their involvement in bullying and cyberbullying events. The other two principals stated that the awareness of

bullying had significantly increased with the implementation of the policy. These two principals felt that because administrators were now mandated to investigate all claims of bullying or cyberbullying behaviors, the reporting of bullying and cyberbullying incidents had sharply increased since the policy went into effect. This impacted time on learning because of the evaluation of multiple reports and the subsequent investigations.

Although these principals clearly believed the policy to be effective in defining their role in bullying behaviors, they also indicated that it initially required a lot of instruction about the difference between bullying and peer conflict. One principal stated, "When the policy went into effect in 2010, everybody who called me or came into my office reported that their child was being bullied." Another explained, "There was often the need to inform parents of what bullying is and is not, repeated and targeted attacks." Since the policy's inception, principals indicated a continual effort to inform children and parents about the difference between bullying and peer conflict. This effort has been effective over the past 5 years, as indicated by one principal, who stated, "There has been a definite reduction in the number of bullying reports to the office." Although all principals expressed a general belief that the policy was particularly effective in dealing with bullying as evidenced by their perceived decrease in bullying behaviors, one principal expressed the perception that with the increase in cyberbullying behaviors and reported cyberbullying incidents, the policy would need revisions. Principals agreed that these revisions would be necessary to keep pace with the new off-campus interactions, which were having an increased impact on the school day and the involvement of administrators.

Instructional Impact

The focus group discussion led to a final emergent theme about the instructional impact and the perceived concerns of teaching staff regarding cyberbullying. All principals felt staff members had concerns about the issue and needed additional training to address cyberbullying effectively with their students. Two principals expressed a belief that the entire staff shared their concerns about the issue, whereas the other two principals felt the concern was more localized with specific staff members. For instance, one principal indicated that all classroom teachers were concerned, and another explained that the fifth- and sixth-grade teachers expressed concerns about cyberbullying. All principals perceived that cyberbullying and cyber activity impacted school climate and relationships and that most of their staff members were at a loss as to how best to address the issue. One principal expressed concern that staff members did not have the appropriate training to deal with cyberbullying activity by stating, “Our teachers are at a disadvantage to know how to deal with this.” A second principal explained, “So far we have seen teachers just forward the complaint down to the office, and we then share it with home from our level.” Once again, the lack of training for teaching staff leads to an interruption of the school day, impacting both the target and the aggressor as both children are referred to the principal’s office.

One of the principals described utilizing responsive classroom strategies when working with an aggressor: “I am the one that takes on the [cyberbullying] issue, and I just ask the student if they want to be treated nicely, and if they do, that they have to treat everyone else nicely.” Although some training is provided for staff, one of the principals

described the school-based dilemma by commenting that while staff is forced to deal with these issues, cyber behavior should be policed by parents. Another principal stated, "Parents don't think we have it solved, but they also are putting too much of the responsibility for what is happening outside of the school on us."

Student training. A subtheme that emerged was that students need more training in what is appropriate cyber behavior. All four principals within the district were mandated to utilize the Michigan Model for Health (Educational Materials Center, 2010)—and later the Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (MADESE, 2014)—to satisfactorily address the issue of bullying and cyberbullying within their schools. They all agreed the 12, hour-long, annual lessons, although effective at addressing bullying, did not do enough to confront cyberbullying. They also agreed that their schools used the single cyberbullying lesson offered by the program but that supplemental materials were necessary. One principal clarified by stating, "I have not seen it done well. It [cyberbullying training] can't be just a one-and-done lesson like in the program." This principal added a concern about the impact on the school day: "How do we keep revisiting this issue, though, when there is so much to get through in a school year?" Only one principal indicated that a substantially separate program was utilized to address cyberbullying while another explained that additional strategies were used to address the issue and that the district attorney also did a student training for children in 4th and 5th grades, once again impacting students' learning experiences during the school day.

Three principals perceived an inevitable future impact to the students' school day based on personal technology devices eventually being permitted as tools while in school. Three of the principals agreed that personal technology usage would increase over time as added educational tools, and one specified that the school would need to provide better lessons on the appropriate use of Internet-based technology tools. Only one principal perceived that students would not be granted that permission because students were not using these tools appropriately, stating, "I have students watching movies, and listening to music, and texting each other while in school."

Parental impact. A final subtheme arose that did not directly address Research Question 1 but is relevant to the study. Principals perceived that training on cyberbullying is needed for parents but perhaps in a different format from previous attempts. Principals described the responses they got from parents when attempting to share information with parents on bullying, cyberbullying, and the policies that preclude school staff from taking an active role in managing cyberbullying due to its off-campus nature. All four principals perceived that training for parents was essential to combat the impact to the instructional environment. Several principals mentioned their attempts to combat the cyberbullying issue by providing cyber training nights for parents. However, one principal explained that not one parent showed up, and another stated that few attended. Additionally, one principal said that when communicating with target families whose students were involved in cyberbullying activity, the information was ignored. Another was of the opinion that parents were still looking for the school to discipline inappropriate cyber activity.

Principals, however, did feel that they had a responsibility to bring parents into the conversation and reported what they had each done to shed light on the cyberbullying problem facing their individual schools. Three of the principals explained that training had been conducted in the evening for parents, but they each used a different format. One principal provided training for the parents of fifth- and sixth-grade students, whereas two others indicated that the training was for all parents. The fourth principal reported that the local district attorney was brought in to do parent training. One principal stated that a cyberbullying information booth had been set up during parent–teacher conferences.

Building on this discussion, I asked principals for their perceptions about the most effective way to inform parents of cyber safety methods they could use to support their children. The first opinion came from a principal who stated that any information had to be user friendly for parents to take the time to engage in the material. Another principal expressed a need for more direct instruction for children and easier access to information by parents. The overall opinion was that separate workshops for parents were not successful. One principal clarified this opinion: "When you make it a separate night, few parents show up, and the ones who do don't need the information because they do watch what their kids are doing."

Three principals began a discussion about using the Internet to inform parents easily and consistently on cyber safety information. While all agreed with this need, one principal expressed an additional concern that students are using social media sites that administrators do not even know exist. One principal recommended that information should be gathered and shared through social media. This comment led to another

principal suggesting that the school's website was the best placement for the information. A different principal added that the information should be on each homepage and be accessed by clicking on an icon. All principals agreed that an icon would be a powerful tool to inform parents quickly of new and changing social media sites. One of the principals recommended using the district ICT team to keep up with new information, whereas another principal felt a snapshot of new apps would be helpful. One of the principals advised that an app of the month would help parents and school personnel keep up with the changing landscape of social media. A different principal thought that making the information printable would allow parents the opportunity to investigate their own child's involvement with any new app or program. Although one of the principals did not actively recommend potential school-based website changes, this principal did support the position that some type of program was needed to support both students and parents, and that anything done would be beneficial to families.

Principals' perceptions clearly indicated a serious issue with cyberbullying in the overall impact of student experiences in particular and the school setting in general. Because of the impact to students' academic lives, school rules involving additional oversight and supervision of personal ICT devices have become necessary. This impact is demonstrated by an increase in cyberbullying reporting that interrupts the school day, by demonstrated student depression that disrupts classroom learning, by policy changes and mandates that require time be spent investigating cyberbullying reports, and by the need for additional resources and teacher training. To a lesser degree, the educational process is impacted by the need to provide additional student training in appropriate cyber

behavior and even through the need to use school resources to support parents with learning about this issue.

Quality of Evidence

To ensure that the qualitative outcomes were valid and reflective of each principal's intent, I sent the typed transcript and open coding of that document to each principal through his or her private e-mail. I used member checking with each participant to confirm his or her endorsement of the conversation and their statements. Each principal replied that the record was accurate and the reported statements were as each intended. Only one principal clarified that although cyberbullying was perceived to be a problem at that school, more often atypical types of behaviors, such as self-injurious behaviors, occurred.

Quantitative Results

Research Questions 2–6 were informed by the parent survey, which I administered between May 26 and June 26, 2015. A total of 162 parents responded to the survey, although not all parents responded to all questions. All parent responses were tabulated to inform Research Question 2: What are parents' perceptions of their children's computer and social media activities? For Research Questions 3–6, data were disaggregated into two groups by grade level, parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6. In some cases, a parent respondent had children in more than one grade-level group. Because the variable of grade level was essential to disaggregate the data for these four research questions, survey answers from parents who thus belonged to both grade-level groups were eliminated from the data set. Research

Questions 4–6 were correlational because they used two variables to describe the quantitative analysis of the survey results: the survey item and the grade-level group of the participant's child. Each research question and hypothesis were analyzed using SPSS software to determine if a relationship existed between a child's grade level and the parents' level of agreement with survey items. I performed a chi-square test on data from Survey Questions 15–20. Results are presented as they relate to each research question.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was designed to elicit parent perceptions of their children's computer and social media activities. Data for Research Question 2 were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Parents were asked multiple survey questions to build a framework of their global understanding of their children's social media activity. Results are shown in Table 2. Of the 154 respondents, only one parent (0.7%) indicated the family did not have Internet access at home. Most of the parents (n = 117, or 76%) indicated their child did not have Internet access in his or her bedroom, and most (n = 118, or 76.6%) indicated they set limits on their child's Internet usage.

Table 2

Social Media Access: Frequency of Parents' Responses to Survey Items 3, 4, 8, and 11–14

Survey question	Yes	No	Don't know	No Internet access
3. Do you have a computer with Internet access in your home?	153	1	0	0
4. Does your child have a computer with Internet access in the bedroom?	35	117	0	0
8. Do you set time limits on your child's Internet usage?	118	28	0	7
11. Does your child have a Facebook account?	9	144	0	0
12. Does your child have a Twitter account?	4	149	0	0
13. Does your child have an instant messaging account?	27	122	4	0
14. Does your child have an Instagram account?	30	119	5	0

Note. $N = 154$.

Survey Questions 11–14 targeted the most common social media sites to determine if parents believed that their children participated in or had accounts for these sites. As presented in Table 2, Instagram was the most common account parents perceived that their children used, with 30 parents (19%) indicating their child's use of Instagram. Instagram (2016) allows the account holder to take a picture or video and post it on another social media site such as Facebook or Twitter. Photos or videos also can be sent directly to another individual through e-mail or text messaging. Only nine parents (5.9%) perceived that their child had a Facebook account, and four of those account holders were in sixth grade. Parents of a kindergartener and a second grader perceived

that their children had Facebook accounts, and all other accounts were perceived as owned by fourth-grade and fifth-grade students. When questioned about an instant messaging account, 27 parents (or 17.5%) perceived that their children did have this type of account, which allows individuals to write instantly back and forth to one another and then delete the conversation.

Survey Questions 5–7 and 9 pertained to Internet access for children, including location (at school or home) and frequency of availability. Parents' responses to Question 5 are shown in Table 3. The great majority of parents believed their child had the most access to a computer with the Internet at home.

Table 3

Internet Access Locations: Frequency and Percentage of Parents' Responses to Survey Item 5

Where child has most access to a computer with the Internet	*n*	%
At home	108	69.7
At school	36	23.2
Smartphone	25	16.1
Other	16	10.3

Note. $N = 155$.

It should be noted that parents of 35 students (or 23%) indicated they had computers in their bedrooms (see Table 2). Of the 16 who indicated *other* as a means to access the Internet on Question 5, however, 10 of those parents (or 6.4 %) labeled that access through a tablet or iPad. An additional 25 parents (or 16.1%) said that their child had a smartphone that allows Internet access (see Table 3). Considering these devices are

mobile, the number of students with Internet access while in the privacy of their bedrooms might be higher than the 35 students (or 23%) identified in Table 2.

After establishing parents' perceptions of their children's access to the Internet, it was next important to determine parents' perceptions of the frequency with which their children used the Internet. Results are shown in Table 4. When parents responded to how often they perceived that their students accessed the Internet, 98 (or 63%) said daily, and 13 (or 8%) said only at school. Only two parents said they did not know how often their children accessed the Internet, and 11 parents skipped the question altogether. These data continued the development of a theme that a majority of parents perceived that their children are engaged in online activity in a potentially unmonitored setting.

Table 4

Frequency of Child's Social Media Access: Frequency of Parents' Responses to Survey Items 6 and 7

Survey question	Multiple times a day	Daily	Once a week	Only at school	Never	Don't know
6. How often child accesses the Internet	0	98	42	13	0	2
7. How often child uses text messaging	22	5	35	0	90	0

Note. $N = 155$.

When asked how often their children used text messaging as a means of communication, 90 parents surveyed (or 59%) stated that their children never used text messaging, although these were primarily parents of children younger than fourth grade. Once students reached fifth and sixth grade, texting activity increased significantly. Parents were also asked their perceptions of the level with which they monitored their

children's online activity. Results are shown in Table 5. The great majority of parents (*n* = 113, or 73.4%) perceived that they monitor their child's online activity almost all the time or always.

Table 5

Frequency of Monitoring of Child's Online Activity: Frequency of Parents' Responses to Survey Item 9

Survey question	Always	Almost all the time	Sometimes	Not at all	No Internet access
9. Frequency of parent monitoring of child's online activity	50	63	30	3	8

Note. $N = 154$.

The last survey question used to address Research Question 2 asked parents how their children spent their time while on the Internet. Parents were asked to check all that applied. Whereas 164 parents responded, there were 391 frequency responses in total. These data are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

How Children Spend Time on the Internet: Frequency of Parents' Responses to Survey Item 10

Time on the Internet	*N*
Gaming	86
Watching videos	82
Children's websites	71
School work	63
Downloading and listening to music	48
Social media	26
E-mail	3
Other	10
No Internet access	2

Note. $N = 391$.

Gaming and watching videos were the two most common perceived activities, followed by accessing children's websites and doing school work, downloading and listening to music, and using social media. E-mail was a minimally selected option. Two parents said their children had no Internet access. Only 26 parents (or 6%) perceived that their children were using social media. However, as shown in Table 5, 33 parents (or 21%) acknowledged limited oversight of their children's online activities, so there is a question as to the validity of these usage perceptions.

Research Question 3

The final research questions, Research Questions 3–6, asked about any relationship between child grade level and parents' agreement or disagreement with survey items. Using chi-square testing, the nature of the relationship could be determined. Table 7 presents the number of parent participants, disaggregated by grade level. For

analysis, data were grouped by younger students (Grades K–3) and older students (Grades 4–6).

Table 7

Grade Levels of Parent Participants' Children

Grade level	*n*
Grades K–3 total[a]	
Kindergarten	20
Grade 1	21
Grade 2	23
Grade 3	27
Grades 4–6 total[b]	
Grade 4	33
Grade 5	36
Grade 6	13

[a]$N = 91$.
[b]$N = 82$.

Research Question 3 was primarily answered using data from Survey Question 15 regarding the term *cyberbullying*. Through Survey Questions 16 and 17 supplemental data were obtained. Hypotheses for Research Question 3 were the following:

$H_0$3: There is no significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a3: There is a significant difference in parents' understanding of the term *cyberbullying* among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

Table 8 shows an analysis of the full distribution of all potential responses of parents who responded to this survey question. As shown in Table 8, 96.9% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they understand the term *cyberbullying*.

Table 8

Parent Understanding of the Term Cyberbullying: Parents' Responses to Survey Question 15

Parent group	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Grades K–3[a]	1	1	0	29	34
Grades 4–6[b]	2	0	3	21	46
Total[c]	3	1	3	50	80

[a]*N* = 65.
[b]*N* = 72.
[c]*N* = 137.

In addition to Survey Question 15, the primary survey question that informed Research Question 3, the full distribution of all potential responses were analyzed for related Survey Questions 16 and 17, as shown in Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9

Parent Perceives Child Is a Victim of Cyberbullying: Parents' Responses to Survey Question 16

Parent group	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Grades K–3[a]	51	9	2	1	2
Grades 4–6[b]	37	20	6	7	2
Total[c]	88	29	8	8	4

[a]*N* = 65.
[b]*N* = 72.
[c]*N* = 137.

Table 10

Parent Perceives Child has Cyberbullied Others: Parents' Responses to Survey Question 17

Parent group	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Grades K–3[a]	57	6	1	0	1
Grades 4–6[b]	50	16	3	1	2
Total[c]	107	22	4	1	3

[a]*N* = 65.
[b]*N* = 72.
[c]*N* = 137.

Fewer than five parents with children in Grades K–3 and in Grades 4–6 selected three of the five survey choices for Survey Questions 15–17 that addressed Research Question 3. One of the assumptions for chi-square analysis is that no more than 20% of the expected frequencies should be less than 5 (Huck, 2012), but this was the case for 40% or more of the cells in the analyses for Survey Questions 15–17. A valid chi-square analysis of Research Question 3 was unable to be completed due to lack of sufficient data. Results of the original chi-square analysis are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Results of Chi-Square Tests for Research Question 3

Survey question	Chi-square	*df*	*p*
15. Parent understands the term *cyberbullying.*	7.074[a]	4	.132
16. Child has been the victim of cyberbullying.	12.575[b]	4	.014
17. Child has cyberbullied others.	5.852[c]	4	.210

Note. *N* = 137.
[a]Six cells (60%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 1.4.
[b]Four cells (40%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 1.9.
[c]Six cells (60%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 1.4.

One method suggested by Huck (2012) for addressing violations of this assumption is to collapse the response categories. Therefore, parent responses to Survey Questions 15–17 were collapsed for the chi-square test into three categories of disagree, undecided, and agree. As presented in Table 12, the chi-square assumption was also violated using the collapsed categories, with more than 20% of the expected frequencies less than 5. The findings, therefore, should be viewed with caution.

Table 12

Collapsed Responses to Survey Questions 15–17 for Research Question 3

Count	Grades K–3[a]			Grades 4–6[b]		
	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree
15. Parent understands the term *cyberbullying.*						
Count	2.0	0.0	63.0	2.0	3.0	67.0
Expected count	1.9	1.4	61.7	2.1	1.6	68.3
16. Child has been the victim of cyberbullying.						
Count	60.0	2.0	3.0	57.0	6.0	9.0
Expected count	55.5	3.8	5.7	61.5	4.2	6.3
17. Child has cyberbullied others.						
Count	63.0	1.0	1.0	66.0	3.0	3.0
Expected count	61.2	1.9	1.9	67.8	2.1	2.1

[a]$N = 65$.
[b]$N = 72$.

Chi-square results from collapsed responses are presented in Table 13. No results were significantly different between parents of children in Grades K–3 and those of children in Grades 4–6.

Table 13

Results of Chi-Square Tests for Research Question 3

Survey question	Chi-square	*df*	*p*
15. Parent understands the term *cyberbullying*.	2.773[a]	2	.250
16. Child has been the victim of cyberbullying.	4.732[b]	2	.094
17. Child has cyberbullied others.	1.717[c]	2	.424

Note. $N = 137$.
[a]Four cells (66.7%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 1.42.
[b]Two cells (33.3%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 3.8.
[c]Four cells (66.7%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 1.9.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 was answered using data from Survey Question 18, which asked parents if they were aware of safety strategies on the computer such as parental controls and website history viewing. As with Research Question 3, data were compared between two groups of parents based on the grade levels of their children. Hypotheses for Research Question 4 were the following:

$H_0$4: There is no significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a4: There is a significant difference in parents' awareness of parent safety measures to prevent cyberbullying among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

Again, a full distribution of all potential responses was analyzed for Research Question 4. Parents responded to Survey Question 18 asking whether parents are aware of computer safety strategies (see Table 14).

Table 14

Parents Aware of Computer Safety Strategies: Parents' Responses to Survey Question 18

Parent group	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Grades K–3[a]	0	3	4	26	32
Grades 4–6[b]	0	0	4	20	48
Total[c]	0	3	8	46	80

[a]*N* = 65.
[b]*N* = 72.
[c]*N* = 137.

Fewer than five parents with children in Grades K–3 and in Grades 4–6 selected three of the five survey choices for that addressed Research Question 4. Again, a valid chi-square analysis of Research Question 4 was unable to be completed due to lack of sufficient data. Results of the original chi-square analysis are presented in Table 15.

Table 15

Results of Chi-Square Tests for Research Question 4

Survey question	Chi-square	*df*	*p*
18. Parent aware of computer safety strategies	4.986[a]	3	.173

Note. *N* = 137.
[a]Six cells (60%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 1.4.

As in Research Question 3, valid chi-square analysis of Research Question 4 was unable to be completed due to lack of sufficient data, and the data were collapsed. Collapsed response frequency results are shown in Table 16. Chi-square results are shown in Table 17. Results were not statistically significant for Research Question 4 at the .05 level; therefore, the null hypothesis for Research Question 4 could not be rejected. Again, more than 20% of the expected frequencies were less than 5.

Table 16

Parents Aware of Computer Safety Strategies: Collapsed Responses to Survey Question 18

Survey Question 18	Grades K–3[a]			Grades 4–6[b]		
	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree
Count	3.0	4.0	58.0	0.0	4.0	68.0
Expected count	1.4	3.8	59.8	1.6	4.2	66.2

[a]*N* = 65.
[b]*N* = 72.

Table 17

Results of Chi-Square Tests on Collapsed Data for Research Question 4

Survey question	Chi-square	*df*	*p*
18. Parent aware of computer safety strategies	3.445[a]	2	.179

Note. *N* = 137.
[a]Four cells (66.7%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 1.42.

Research Question 5

Research Question 5 was answered using data from Survey Question 20, which asked parents if they were interested in participating in a training program for parents on Internet safety such as information security, Internet rules, and cyberbullying. Data were compared between two groups of parents, based on the grade levels of their children. Hypotheses for Research Question 5 were the following:

$H_0$5: There is no significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K-3 and parents of students in Grades 4-6.

H_a5: There is a significant difference in parents' interest in participating in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K-3 and parents of students in Grades 4-6.

Table 18 shows a full distribution of responses of parents. These data were once again insufficient for valid chi-square analysis due to 40% of the cells having expected frequencies less than 5. Results of the original chi-square analysis are presented in Table 19.

Table 18

Parents Interested in Participating in Training Program: Parents' Responses to Survey Question 20

Parent group	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Grades K–3[a]	0	2	11	27	25
Grades 4–6[b]	0	3	11	37	21
Total[c]	0	5	22	64	46

[a]*N* = 65.
[b]*N* = 72.
[c]*N* = 137.

Table 19

Results of Chi-Square Tests for Research Question 5

Survey question	Chi-square	*df*	*p*
20. Parents interested in participating in training program	4.141[a]	4	.387

Note. *N* = 137.
[a]Four cells (40%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 1.9.

These data were also collapsed with the response frequency results shown in Table 20. Chi-square results are shown in Table 21. Results were not statistically

significant for Research Question 5 at the .05 level; therefore, the null hypothesis for Research Question 5 could not be rejected.

Table 20

Parents Interested in Participating in Training Program: Collapsed Responses to Survey Question 20

Count	Grades K–3[a]			Grades 4–6[b]		
	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree
Count	2.0	11.0	52.0	3.0	11.0	58.0
Expected count	2.4	10.4	52.2	2.6	11.6	57.8

[a]$N = 65$.
[b]$N = 72$.

Table 21

Results of Chi-Square Tests on Collapsed Data for Research Question 5

Survey question	Chi-square	*df*	*p*
20. Parents interested in participating in training program	0.170[a]	2	.918

Note. $N = 137$.
[a]Two cells (33.3%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 2.37.

In every case for Research Questions 3, 4, and 5, insufficient data were available to compute the chi-square analyses; therefore, I was unable to determine if a relationship existed. As the assumptions of the tests were not met, results displayed in the tables should be viewed with caution.

Research Question 6

Research Question 6 was answered using data from Survey Question 19, which asked parents if they were interested in having their child participate in a training program for Internet safety such as information security, Internet rules, and

cyberbullying. Data were compared between two groups of parents, based on the grade levels of their children. Hypotheses for Research Question 6 were the following:

$H_0$6: There is no significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

H_a6: There is a significant difference in parents' interest in having their children participate in an Internet training program among parents of students in Grades K–3 and parents of students in Grades 4–6.

Table 22

Parents Interested in Their Child Participating in Training Program: Parents' Responses to Survey Question 19

Parent group	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Grades K–3[a]	2	3	13	19	28
Grades 4–6[b]	2	11	16	23	20
Total[c]	4	14	29	42	48

[a]*N* = 65.
[b]*N* = 72.
[c]*N* = 137.

Table 23

Results of Chi-Square Tests for Research Question 6

Survey question	Chi-square	*df*	*p*
19. Parents interested in their child participating in training program	4.141[a]	4	.387

Note. *N* = 137.
[a]Three cells (30%) had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 1.9.

Insufficient data were available to compute the chi-square; therefore, the data were again collapsed. Collapsed response frequency results are shown in Table 24.

Chi-square results are shown in Table 25. Results were not statistically significant for Research Question 6 at the .05 level, indicating that the null hypothesis for Research Question 6 could not be rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the number of parents who would be interested in having their child participate in Internet training programs based on grade-level categories.

Table 24

Parents Interested in Their Child Participating in Training Program: Collapsed Responses to Survey Question 19

Count	Grades K–3[a]			Grades 4–6[b]		
	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree
Count	5.0	13.0	47.0	13.0	16.0	43.0
Expected count	8.5	13.8	42.7	9.5	15.2	47.3

[a]*N* = 65.
[b]*N* = 72.

Table 25

Results of Chi-Square Tests on Collapsed Data for Research Question 6

Survey question	Chi-square	*df*	*p*
19. Parents interested in their child participating in training program	3.696[a]	2	.158

Note. *N* = 137.
[a]No cells had expected count < 5. The minimum expected count was 8.54.

Discussion of Quantitative Findings

As noted earlier, the findings for Research Questions 3–5 should be viewed with the understanding that the chi-square assumption of minimal expected frequencies was violated in both the original analysis and the analysis using the collapsed categories. There was only an 81% participation rate. Participation might have been increased by

leaving the survey window open for a longer period of time. Findings for Research Question 6, once collapsed, provided valid analysis. The chi-square analyses were computed in both cases for Research Questions 3–6, and no significant relationships were found for the groups of parents according to their child's grade level (Grades K–3 vs. Grades 4–6). Further inquiry with a larger population could provide additional evidence that these results would be replicated. However, the data for both groups combined were valuable in informing the study project. Table 26 shows combined responses to Survey Questions 15–20.

Table 26

Collapsed Total Responses to Survey Questions 15–20

Survey question	Disagree	Undecided	Agree
15. Parent understands the term *cyberbullying*	4	3	130
16. Child has been victim of cyberbullying	117	8	12
17. Child has cyberbullied others	129	4	4
18. Parent aware of computer safety strategies	3	8	126
19. Parent interested in having child participate in computer safety training	18	29	90
20. Parent interested in participating in computer safety training	5	22	110

Note. $N = 137$.

Only three parents out of the 137 acceptable surveys indicated that they were to some degree unaware of parent safety strategies on the computer such as parent controls and website history viewing. Eight parents were undecided; the other 126 parents (92%), regardless of grade level, indicated they knew how to monitor their child's Internet activities and keep their child safe. Based on the fact that 41 parents reported sometimes or never monitoring their child's Internet activity, an assumption can be made that there

is a disconnect between parents' perception of their safety knowledge and the serious capacity for harm when children are accessing the Internet. Other research has confirmed that parents of young children believe they are carefully monitoring Internet activity (National Crime Prevention Council, 2007). Parents permit young children to access social media sites, which opens children to cyberbullying without parental awareness (Snakenborg et al., 2011).

Another important finding that informed the study project was that, regardless of child grade level, parent participants indicated interest in training for themselves and their children. As shown in Table 26, only 5 parents (3.6%) were not interested in training for themselves and 18 parents (13%) were not interested in training for their child.

Integration of Findings

After establishing the guiding research questions for the study of a cyberbullying problem in a rural elementary school, several research designs were considered to investigate the issue. Although a quantitative study was considered, it was determined that statistical cyberbullying data were limited based on actual data collected at the study school and that cyberbullying reporting was rare (Li, 2008). A qualitative study alone would rely solely on the perceptions of building principals and would not provide an analysis of actual access to ICT devices by students or answer questions about parent concerns or needs. A mixed methods design would best answer all of the research questions. For this reason, a parallel design with two sequences carried out in isolation from one another was deemed necessary to provide the most authentic results. The participants for both sequences of the study were determined based on the research

questions, and qualitative focus group questions and a quantitative survey were selected to gather information directly related to the research questions. The plan, procedures, and protocols were designed to carry out the study.

The qualitative findings revealed ongoing concerns at the school level through local administrators that cyberbullying and cyber activity were clearly impacting the school day, school resources, and peer relationships. Principals were also concerned that parents were often unaware of their child's cyberbullying activity, whether as a target or as an aggressor, until the situation became serious enough to enter the school environment. The quantitative findings indicated that parents were able to identify a concern about their children's involvement in cyber activity while still demonstrating a limited awareness of actual student involvement with the Internet, particularly with social media. Parents perceived that they were actively involved in monitoring their student's online behaviors but demonstrated that they did not realize the potential harm of hand-held media devices that connect to the Internet.

This study provides important, relevant findings that can lead to positive social change through a specific curriculum project that will support, through easy accessibility, parent and student understanding of the dangers and potential harm of specific social media applications. This social media curriculum is designed to target the impact of cyberbullying, which Patchin and Hinduja (2010) found to be psychologically destructive. The creation of the project, an online social media training for parents and students, was informed by the results of both the qualitative and quantitative sequences.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The findings of this study indicated that cyberbullying was an ongoing concern at varying levels for both parents and school principals. The findings also established that, in spite of each participating school's best efforts to inform parents of the potential harm of cyber activity and social media websites, attendance at scheduled parent trainings and workshops was low. The few parents who did attend were already proactive in monitoring their children's online behaviors.

The project was designed to meet the needs of the local school district based on the research findings. The need for adult training on the currently most used and popular social media platforms is evident. To provide this training in a manner conducive to parental accessibility, I determined that parents need to have instant access to the information from the comfort of their homes or from the technology embedded within their daily lives, such as computers or cellular telephones. The project includes 12 focus lessons on social media platforms. Each lesson will be highlighted each month and placed on the study school's homepage in a clickable "App of the Month Curriculum" link. The goal of this training is for parents and students to learn about the advantages of each social media site, as well as to inform them about the potential dangers of each site. An adult section in the link will provide information on how to monitor a child's activity and set safety protocols for those children. Although the intent is that children and their parents or guardians have this information, the links are available to any others interested, such as teachers, grandparents, or older siblings.

The project genre is a cyber awareness training curriculum for parents of elementary students and the students themselves. The overarching goal of the project is to provide an online library of Internet and social media application information for parents and students to access as needed. An additional goal is to provide the target audience of parents and students easy access to specific features and cautions about current social media websites. A final project goal is to provide viable responses for students and parents to use if exposed to unsafe cyber activity. The training outcomes for students and parents are knowledge related to social media applications and skills in using them in a safe and appropriate manner.

Rationale

The targeted positive social change in this study is to inform families of the potential dangers of specific social media applications. Findings discussed in Section 2 evidenced that social media sites have been the most prolific sources of cyberbullying. Because parents are often unaware of this destructive impact, providing learning opportunities for families is imperative (Morgan, 2013). Principals participating in the focus group also indicated that students used social media to target peers when participating in cyberbullying activity, which further indicated limited parent awareness of cyber activity. The parent surveys confirmed the lack of awareness and again highlighted the need to provide students and parents with information on the potential harm caused by cyberbullying through social media (Fleming, 2012). Thus, the genre of professional development and training curriculum and materials is an appropriate choice for the project.

Although the original consideration was to offer on-site trainings for both parents and students about cyberbullying and methods to monitor and prevent that type of activity, findings from the principals' focus group provided the consistent opinion that these types of trainings are underutilized and in all cases had minimal attendance. The lack of attendance was confirmed in the literature, based on the evidence that scheduling, childcare, transportation issues, and personal conflicts inhibited adult involvement in voluntary site-based trainings (Cramer, Cramer, Fisher, & Fink, 2008). Additionally, parents tend to be more encouraged to seek information and training when the materials are easily accessible or when they can access those materials when in need or crisis (Della Cioppa, O'Neil, & Craig, 2015).

As presented in Section 2, parents expressed their concern about cyberbullying as well as some interest in learning more about cyberbullying and how to support their children's safety in the cyber world. Further, principals articulated that the types of cyber activity that children are involved in are not only beyond what parents are aware of but also outside of the knowledge of the educational system. Also, principals unilaterally indicated that the training conducted for students at school about the topic of cyberbullying is minimal. Schools need additional supplemental training opportunities for students as well as families. Again, providing training and curriculum materials to families supports the findings and results of the study.

The focus group findings, the parent survey results, and the literature evidenced that adults are seeking better methods of helping students safely navigate the cyber world (Robinson, 2012). What is also clear is that many adults do not express confidence in

their own understanding and knowledge of the online social media websites that students utilize to gain access to peers and social activity (Paterson, Brewer, & Stamler, 2013). In order to address both the needed training opportunities and the evidence that parents are unable or uncomfortable attending site-based workshops, the project can provide families with easily accessed training materials on the school's homepage, available to them from the comfort of their own homes (N. C. Jacobs, Völlink, Dehue, & Lechner, 2014). Also, the trainings will contain focused information in a monthly installment format provided with general cyber safety information and an App of the Month Curriculum highlighted for targeted instruction in a differentiated format (Fleming, 2012).

Each module includes written materials, an embedded link to the social media application's website for further investigation, and a short demonstration video to guide parents in their training about the focus topic. Videos have been found to be the most accessible method for learning new material in an off-site setting (Freifeld, 2014). Additionally, this curriculum is at no cost to the school district, and its use is completely voluntary on the part of families. In each monthly training, I provide parents an opportunity to learn about a single social media site, talk with their children about the information, and then observe and supervise their children using the site if they choose to permit them to participate in the site. This training allows parents who are concerned about their child's cyber safety, cyberbullying behaviors, or being the target of cyber attacks to learn about prevention and intervention strategies in a nonthreatening, easily accessible, online training module (Paterson et al., 2013).

Review of the Literature

Through the analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data of the study, I determined that administrators perceived that cyberbullying is a problem for their individual schools that impacts the school day. Also, a larger number of parents of students in Grades 4–6 than parents of those in Grades K–3 perceived that their children are involved in cyberbullying activity, although this result was not found to be statistically significant through chi-square analysis. Although a lower percentage of all parents were interested in cyber training for themselves versus cyber training for their children, the level of interest was similar for parents of students in both Grades K–3 and Grades 4–6. The interest level being consistent among all parents further supported the goal of developing a cyberbullying intervention project. Morgan (2013) explained that for any type of prevention endeavor to be robust, parents must be actively involved. Beale and Hall (2007) explained that parents are imperative to the process when addressing serious school issues. To begin to address the issue of cyberbullying in a significant manner, any project design should fully embrace a parent partnership.

In order to reach saturation in the literature, the analysis outcomes and the project considerations were taken into account by using the following search terms: *effective parent trainings, cyberbullying trainings, online trainings, online vs. site based trainings, cyberbullying interventions, parent and school partnerships, web-based trainings, engaging parents, parental involvement, cyberbullying intervention strategies, cyberbullying programs, cyberbullying solutions, effectiveness of internet trainings, parent support,* and *parent requests for cyber training.* Although most of the books and

articles were current, written since 2011, I used older relevant materials when appropriate. I retrieved over 1,000 books from the search and downloaded 60 for in-depth review based on the relevance of the abstracts or book covers. Through the Walden library, I utilized multiple databases to harvest the pertinent articles, dissertations, and books. The online databases supporting this search are Google Scholar, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, EBSCOhost, ERIC, Thoreau, PsycARTICLES, Education Research Complete, Sage Journals, and ScienceDirect.

Of the 60 articles, studies, and books read and reviewed, I selected 33 for the literature review and the creation of the cyberbullying awareness project. The foci of these materials were varied, and I carefully developed three topics that targeted the outcomes of the data analyses and a direction to address the problems identified. Whereas the initial literature review focused on the theoretical foundation and the characteristics of cyberbullying, this review targeted the effectiveness of online versus site-based trainings, cyberbullying prevention and intervention solutions, and methods for engaging parents and the subsequent impact.

Online Versus Site-Based Training

For more than two decades, online trainings have been providing learning opportunities in business, education, and the health industries (Cramer et al., 2008). During this time, multiple studies have been conducted to evaluate instructional effectiveness and the programmatic implications of these trainings. Some of the highlighted topics considered were instructional capacity and effectiveness, strategies, accessibility, participant proficiency, and cost. Freifeld (2014) determined that any

organization conducting a needs assessment or needs analysis before creating online trainings found those trainings to be successful and impactful for participants.

Instructional capacity and effectiveness. The literature indicated that site-based, static trainings related to cyberbullying are typically preestablished with an agenda and direct instructional outlines, whereas online trainings have the benefit of tailoring the instruction or support to the exact population targeted by the trainers (N. C. Jacobs et al., 2014). Another advantage identified for web-based trainings was the consistency of the instructional content and the equity with which all participants received that content (T. V. Paul, 2014). Additionally, live trainings are inflexible and formal, which can be intimidating for parents (Axford, Lehtonen, Kaoukji, Tobin, & Berry, 2012). In contrast, it is nearly impossible to provide wrap-around care for families with high-priority needs when the trainings were provided in an online format (Axford et al., 2012). Della Cioppa et al. (2015) explained that the most important aspect of these trainings, whether online or site based, was to provide parents with access to differentiated instructional methods similar to the instruction found in today's classrooms. This approach has the greatest possibility for success by meeting the needs of parents at their many levels of cyber competency and individual learning styles (Fleming, 2012).

In a study by Sanders, Dittman, Farruggia, and Keown (2014), participant satisfaction with online training as well as site-based training was a significant consideration when determining program effectiveness. Parents participating in the online training for caregiver education in caring for their children with fetal alcohol disorders expressed an 82% satisfaction rate with their experience, whereas participants expressed

a 92% satisfaction rate with the site-based training (Kable, Coles, Strickland, & Taddeo, 2012). However, an additional study of an online training for parents of children with autism found that families reported they were better able to meet their child's at-home needs after completing the Telehealth training (Vismara, McCormick, Young, Nadhan, & Monlux, 2013). Vismara et al. (2013) also reported that the parents were able to share their learning with other caregivers and essentially became trainers themselves based on their learning.

Instructional capacity was found to be more effective in the first language of the participants (Axford et al., 2012). Site-based trainers found providing handouts and materials and live translators for the various languages of participants to be challenging (Jäger, Amado, Matos, & Pessoa, 2010). Fleming (2012) also discovered that when much of the information was available in both English and Spanish, an added layer of support was provided to families perceived to be in the at-risk category. Also, providing multiple online language translations of trainings and materials resulted in increased participation rates as families were more invested (Fleming, 2012).

The final consideration when focusing on instructional capacity was the evaluation of the needed infrastructure to support well-planned trainings. In the case of site-based trainings, the facility availability, available trainers, scheduling, and individual participant needs had to be accounted for (Lockwood & Gooley, 2001). In online trainings the electronic infrastructure and delivery capacity for the planned online trainings needed identifying before posting available trainings (Lockwood & Gooley, 2001).

Strategies. Of all the strategies for successful implementation of online trainings, interactive components were received as most successful, whereas the face-to-face approach of site-based trainings rated highest for live workshops and built relationships, which increased participation. Freifeld (2014) found that the most effective approach when providing online training included the capacity to provide graphics, videos, and voiceovers. Vismara et al. (2013) explained that videos are highly effective to the families participating in the training. Video demonstrations were also a highlight in the Positive Parenting study (Sanders et al., 2014), and parenting intervention trainings have used video clips for a successful outcome (Dittman, Farruggia, Palmer, Sanders, & Keown, 2014). The other important component to online training seen as successful was providing the instructional materials in small chunks often of just 15-minute sessions or less (Freifeld, 2014).

The ability to dialogue and ask questions was the strategy highlighted for successful outcomes in site-based trainings (Freifeld, 2014). Instructor modeling was seen as an integral part of the learning process (Cramer et al., 2008). Face-to-face support was another reason for preferring in-person workshops and trainings (Paterson et al., 2013). However, for parents seeking social support, Paterson et al. (2013) found an attraction to being able to share experiences online because of the ability to be honest while also being anonymous.

Accessibility. A study specific to online cyberbullying intervention training found that site-based trainings were rare and that anonymous help was more appealing to families seeking support with this problem (N. C. Jacobs et al., 2014). In general, the

availability of site-based trainings was found to be static and dependent upon distance and scheduling conflicts shared by agencies and participants (Kable et al., 2012). In many cases, face-to-face training opportunities were not available at all (Paterson et al., 2013). In districts that used technology to provide parent training, the lack of available high-speed Internet or the cost of the service was a concern for some families (Fleming, 2012). However, Fleming (2012) indicated that this was becoming less of an issue as more access was becoming available through public access points and the growth of fiber-optic cabling across the country. Online trainings were found to be more readily available even in areas where site-based trainings were not an option (Vismara et al., 2013).

The other significant accessibility factor was the ease of availability of pertinent information whenever needed (Paterson et al., 2013). Regardless of the time of day or day of the week, useful material and training opportunities were regularly offered by agencies to support families or individuals in need of information (Della Cioppa et al., 2015). Large families, single-parent homes, and two-income families were found to be hesitant to participate in any trainings that would add specific time commitments to their lives (Axford et al., 2012). Hectic schedules, childcare issues, or remote locations of many adults and families would prevent participation in workshops, but these concerns became obsolete when participating in online trainings (Fleming, 2012). For those with no access to specialty agencies or support services, web-based training has provided basic support and informational assistance in an as-needed format (Kable et al., 2012).

Also, if the direct instruction were missed or misinterpreted during the class session, it was not available at a later date, whereas online materials were accessible

again and again, and at any time (Cramer et al., 2008). Another study about a formalized Positive Parenting Program determined that low parent participation rates kept site-based trainings from being successful and that self-help training provided a safe and accessible alternative (Sanders et al., 2014).

Participant proficiency. One area of concern investigated by many of the studies was the ability of the participants to learn from an online format. The level of computer-based skills and the capacity of the participants to be independent learners were highly impactful to the learning outcomes (Kable et al., 2012). High-level learners were generally found to be self-motivated and sought support when needed; however, an online format was more challenging and might have caused some participants to give up on their training (O'Neil & Perez, 2013). Parents were usually less computer savvy than their children and sometimes needed extra support in participating in online trainings (Beale & Hall, 2007). In light of this, many large school districts have provided digital literacy training for families with multiple follow-up trainings through web-based sessions (Fleming, 2012). Fleming (2012) explained that low-income parents utilized the site-based Internet trainings and felt empowered by their follow-up access to online information.

In a study about online parenting interventions, Dittman et al. (2014) raised the concern that some families may not be successful using self-directed programs, particularly if the families had at-risk characteristics such as low socioeconomic backgrounds or high levels of dysfunction. Nonetheless, the same study found that the outcomes for these families were similar regardless of whether they were in a face-to-

face setting or an online setting. The main predictor of success was the fidelity with which the parents completed the trainings (Dittman et al., 2014). To further support this finding, T. V. Paul (2014) explained that by the very nature of their background experiences and social responsibilities, adults tend to be self-directed learners.

Cost. The expense of site-based trainings has been a major contributing factor for the investigation and implementation of online trainings. Vismara et al. (2013) found that when agencies considered the cost for site-based instruction they needed to calculate the expense of the trainer, the size of the expected trainee group, the overhead costs of the site, refreshment costs, copying and materials costs, travel expenses by both trainers and participants, and any other extraneous costs. In order for on-site trainings to be cost-effective, trainings needed a sufficient number of participants, which often did not occur with voluntary learning opportunities (Axford et al., 2012).

Cyber trainings were found to be more cost effective and convenient than site-based workshops (Cramer et al., 2008). Web-based trainings could reach multiple numbers of participants with no difference in base costs and were easily distributed to the trainees (Freifeld, 2014). However, a cost analysis of any web-based trainings was necessary before instructional development began (Driscoll, 2002). Once development costs were put into place, the minimal cost of providing the trainings allowed agencies to immediately deliver the web-based materials to large populations (Sanders et al., 2014). The final analysis of costs for providing web-based trainings needed to include access to the information that would provide the learning objectives, the location of the

participants, and the availability of the delivery platforms for the agency (O'Neil & Perez, 2013).

Cyberbullying Prevention and Intervention Solutions

Because cyberbullying was perceived to be a problem in all of the schools where the focus group principals worked as administrators, investigating solutions to this problem was an important part of the project and its outcomes. Although the level of parental awareness of cyberbullying varied, parents expressed interest in learning about cyberbullying issues. The literature review demonstrated that solutions to cyberbullying were centered around the analysis of experts, current research, and formal bullying programs.

Analysis of experts. In a study that examined experts' and trainers' views on cyberbullying prevention, the most common answer given to solve the problem was to enforce stricter rules and tighter monitoring of cyber activity (Jäger et al., 2010). In addition to rules, other experts determined that schools in particular need to have well-defined policies about cyberbullying that include both school and home settings (Chibbaro, 2007). Considering the problem of cyberbullying through a panel of experts, Perren et al. (2012) determined that clear solutions do not currently exist, at least with any clear long-range data to show program success. The same panel concluded that additional investigation and research need to be completed on strategy effectiveness concerning cyberbullying.

Further research indicated that another group of experts clearly described the answer to cyberbullying in going beyond adult supervision to building digital citizens as

the only path to a successful solution (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012). Kowalski et al. (2012) found that students had ever-increasing access to the Internet, and only through training and understanding of the impact of cyberbullying could children and youth truly understand the importance of appropriate cyber activity. Cyberbullying experts Hinduja and Patchin (2012) also explained that the best solutions go beyond strategies and include quickly and consistently addressing inappropriate cyber behaviors and building a school climate that fosters respect and positive social relationships among peers.

Current research. A recent study reviewing methods for combating cyberbullying found that the most successful approach was when students, parents, and schools worked together to respond (Perren et al., 2012). This theme was consistent with another research study that targeted cyberbullying and practices that would meet the problem directly (Cassidy, Faucher, & Jackson, 2013). Cassidy et al. (2013) described as essential that all stakeholders participate in the establishment of solutions to the problem of cyberbullying. The most important finding from their study was that schools had to develop a culture of openness between students and adults, as a climate of silence almost certainly would lead to cyberbullying behaviors (Cassidy et al., 2013).

An additional research study was clearly focused on cyberbullying solutions from the perspective of educators. In this case, participants described the need to have appropriate cyber behaviors demonstrated at home and at school; schools and families needed a collaborative approach to make any true progress in addressing the issue (Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2012b). The educators in the study found that restricting cyber usage and increasing consequences for cyber behavior seemed to escalate the

problem rather than reduce the behaviors. Although the perspectives of the educators in Cassidy et al.'s (2012b) study were in line with the research, they did not express any interest in the student responses given during the research, and students clearly indicated that cyberbullying occurred right under the noses of both the educators and administrators. When Cassidy et al. (2012b) specifically asked to meet with educators and administrators from both of the participant high schools to review the results of student responses, no date was set by either facility. Further research found few high-impact studies on the prevention of cyberbullying, and fewer still involving ethnic-minority students (Zych, Ortega-Ruiz, & Del Rey, 2015). Also, of the studies reported by Perren et al. (2012), a limited number actually focused on successful strategies for targeting cyberbullying.

Formal programs. In some cases, the literature revealed that the most successful focus on bullying prevention strategies required a systematic approach to combating the multifaceted issue, involving all constituents in the answer (Della Cioppa et al., 2015). Della Cioppa et al. (2015) also pointed out that most formalized cyberbullying programs did not include family or community constituents, which was the most likely reason they netted little success. Parents, students, and educators recommended that school leaders should do more to develop their own programs to instruct children about cyberbullying and appropriate cyber behavior (Cassidy et al., 2013). However, when considering formal programs, the consistent theme was that the program must include the three main stakeholders: students, parents, and teachers (Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011).

In many instances, literature reported minimal support for cyberbullying through formalized cyberbullying programs (Faccio, Iudici, Costa, & Belloni, 2014). This was not seen as a negative due to the quickly changing landscape of social media, cyber activity and cyber devices and due to the assumption that programs directed at the technical aspects of cyber training alone would not result in a change of behavior (Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011). Nonetheless, providing technical support for parents and students to block cyberbullies and encouraging parental oversight of Internet usage have remained the most consistently recommended strategy to support students who are targets of cyberbullying (Perren et al., 2012).

Along with personal and home-based supports, the school was seen as a viable stakeholder in addressing the issue of cyberbullying. One critical school-based program recommendation was to ensure that training was ongoing and not single-session lessons that are quickly forgotten (Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011). Additionally, schools needed to support the education of all stakeholders, not just students, and the training needed to move from punitive to transformative by investigating the harmful effects of cyberbullying and destructive cyber activity (Jäger et al., 2010). Finally, trainings for parents and teachers must go beyond teaching about the positive and negative uses of technology (Cassidy et al., 2013). As Jäger et al. (2010) explained, a cyberbullying program that will work with efficacy must include cognitive, social, and behavioral elements.

Methods for Engaging Parents and the Subsequent Impact

Researchers found a strong indication that students who begin using technology in the home of technologically savvy parents had a greater chance of using technology in a positive manner (Cross et al., 2015). However, Cross et al. (2015) found that most parents indicated a low awareness of technology understanding and their children's involvement in social media. Yet, because most cyberbullying and destructive cyber activity occurs outside of the school day, parents must become engaged in the solution to this problem (Robinson, 2012). Robinson (2012) also found that peer relationships were impacted in classrooms and social areas of the school, and principals then became involved in disciplining negative school behavior, which was directly linked to cyber activity. For the purposes of this literature review, engaging parents and the impact of that strategy were considered through the aspects of building relationships, partnering, and parental needs.

Building relationships. When considering the first steps to building relationships with parents, school staff should look at the current level of connection and communication with families and capitalize on that connection (Axford et al., 2012). This is especially true when targeting cyberbullying, as the most successful schools addressing cyberbullying problems have a strong and ever-developing rapport with families (Robinson, 2012). However, many educators have acknowledged receiving limited training in working with parents (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005). Schaffhauser (2014) reported most educators felt that parents were relying too heavily on schools to train students about cyberbullying and cyber safety, which led to a breakdown in school-to-home

relationships. Parents, on the other hand, expressed their concern that teachers saw them as apathetic in their engagement with their child's education (Fleming, 2012).

The importance of building parental relationships can get overlooked. Olmstead (2013) found evidence that students whose parents were actively involved in their education tended to be the most successful learners. When building a new support program, no relationship with parents contributed to parents' feeling overwhelmed and intimidated by the initiative and choosing to disengage from the process (Axford et al., 2012). As was established earlier, parental involvement is one of the keys to a successful intervention program addressing cyberbullying. Also, the more established the relationship with parents, the more comfortable families are in sharing cyberbullying activity with the school (Robinson, 2012). This immediate response to any incident is another effective strategy recommended by the experts (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012). Finally, one parenting involvement study found that 91% of parents expressed that school communication with parents was *important* or *very important* (Olmstead, 2013). These data indicated that at the least, parents wanted to be part of the flow of important information coming from schools.

Partnering. One study involving partnering with parents found that including parents in school-based initiatives led to a greater level of authority experienced by school staff during the implementation of these programs (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005). Furthermore, when schools and families entered a partnership with any given program, participants experienced maximum benefit and success was one of the outcomes (Olmstead, 2013). However, these partnerships should go well beyond the involvement of

parents as classroom helpers or copy makers to achieve the level of being collaborative partners (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005). Because parents are seen as one of the primary lines of defense for schools when dealing with an issue, and specifically with cyberbullying, school staff must ally with families to combat the issue (Beale & Hall, 2007).

When school staff intentionally reached out to engage parents as partners, parents felt empowered to become a part of the solution to whatever problem was being addressed (Fleming, 2012). When parents did not feel engaged by schools, they often expressed a feeling of isolation and did not feel free to open up about their family's needs or concerns (Love, Sanders, Metzler, Prinz, & Kast, 2013). Parents also expressed that they often felt undervalued and ignored (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005). Love et al. (2013) found that parents were interested in becoming partners with schools, but that the methods school staff used to engage them either led to successful alliances or further alienated families.

Parental needs. Because of the importance of continuing to build bridges to parents rather than distancing families and schools, staff should consider the needs of parents. When discussing interest in working with schools, parents described as vulnerable expressed their preference in receiving information via the Internet due to their ability to anonymously and conveniently access the information and because social media sites were part of the daily platform for communication in these families (Love et al., 2013). Parents described as mainstream expressed their need for cyber language training, including commonly used acronyms by their children that held hidden meanings that made them feel out of the loop (Beale & Hall, 2007). All parents shared the

difficulties in participating in school-based awareness programs due to many of the factors previously stated, such as the need for translators, childcare, transportation, and scheduling conflicts (Axford et al., 2012). Parents, however, expressed their desire to have ongoing online support to provide consistent information that would address current issues and would be easy to navigate (Paterson et al., 2013).

Other than parents' preferred methods of receiving information, they also expressed concern about their inability to stay abreast of the ever-changing social media platforms and virtual websites (Robinson, 2012). Additionally, Robinson (2012) found that parents were unsure how to identify signs of cyberbullying activity with their children and that they were seeking alternate strategies to deal with their children's inappropriate cyber activity other than banning technology accessibility. Parents also requested that any provided cyber information allow them to search for material specific to their child's issues or concerns (Paterson et al., 2013).

The purpose of the literature review was to consider how best to provide training to address the problem of cyberbullying in the study school, as evidenced in the findings of this study. Both the need and desire for cyberbullying prevention and intervention trainings are valid, yet the literature review and the confirming experiences of the focus group principals determined that site-based trainings would not have garnered the participation necessary to impact cyber awareness at the study school. Through the literature review in Section 1 as well as the data analysis in Section 2, the importance of the project was established. The literature review in Section 3 provided a clear direction for implementation of the project. Further, a need exists for both online training

opportunities as well as a video component for successful participant access to the information.

Project Description

The project based on the outcomes of this study is a cyber awareness training that specifically addresses the instructional needs of elementary students and their parents in the appropriate use of, positive and safety features for, and dangerous components of social media and online resources. The foundation of the training module design comes from both the qualitative and quantitative findings presented in Section 2. Additionally, the literature review from Section 1 highlighted the need for this type of curriculum, and the literature review in Section 3 added the framework used to develop the curriculum. Each training module, called the *App of the Month Curriculum*, will be systematically implemented at the study school in monthly modules over a calendar year. Each training module will include a video that describes the highlighted social media site and how to access, download, or enable each site. The design has an explanation of the purpose, age requirements, and attributes of each site, followed by the cautions that parents should be aware of when determining whether or not a site is appropriate for their child.

Although the findings from this study indicated that parents perceive they are actively involved in monitoring cyber behaviors, parents also reported minimal awareness of their children holding active accounts in specific social media platforms (Robinson, 2012). For this reason, if a parent has approved a particular site for the child, the matching training module will provide a set of talking points the parent can use to discuss site safety and expected behaviors. Parents also will learn parental oversight

options they can use to supervise their child's online activities. The description of these talking points gives parents a method for having informed discussions with their children while providing adults the background knowledge needed to take on a supervisory role for each social media site.

The initial project will include 12 monthly training modules, each requiring 90 minutes for the participant to complete. If a participant cannot complete an entire module in one sitting, he or she can pause the training and return to complete it at a later date. If participants are disconnected, they can restart the training and forward to the place where they previously left off. When a new App of the Month Curriculum is posted on the school website each month, the previous month's online training module will be kept in a repository of prior trainings. The link to the bank of previously posted training modules will be available on the left side of the home page. Once clicked, an "App of the Month Curriculum" title link opens the material for parents who wish to reexamine that month's information. The goal is that over time a social media training-module warehouse will develop of all the investigated sites.

The first training module will begin on the first of the month following the publication of this study. The first training modules to be posted will be those highlighted in the parent survey from Section 2 of the study: Facebook, Twitter, instant messaging, and Instagram. Following the initial plan, the upcoming monthly schedule includes social media sites that are currently popular with students. These include YouTube, Kik, Snapchat, Tumblr, Google+, Vine, WhatsApp, and Pheed. A sample of a complete 90-minute module including the training video information, graphics, handouts, a reflection

questionnaire, and the questionnaire answer key is attached in Appendix A. Also attached as part of Appendix A are the content and resource outlines for the remaining 11 modules.

Needed Resources and Supports

To successfully implement the App of the Month Curriculum training modules, well-functioning technology easily accessible to the public is needed. Primarily, the school's website will be needed to house and make accessible the monthly curriculum modules. Additionally, technology is needed by the children and adults to access the information from off site. Based on the parent survey, all but one family who participated indicated that their children had access to the Internet.

To implement this project, cooperation is needed with the local superintendent, the Internet technology director, and the local ICT staff member. The superintendent of the local school district needs to approve the monthly training modules being embedded into the study school's website and changed monthly. Also, the district ICT director will need to open access to the web changes to the school's homepage. Finally, the local ICT staff member will need to upload each new module monthly and move the prior module into a bank of previously posted modules.

Potential Barriers

One potential barrier to the project is the lack of a technological infrastructure necessary to post the modules for participation in the trainings. The study school's website currently has other training and informational videos running without a problem, so infrastructure should not be an issue. Two videos, one on volunteerism and the other

on standards-based report cards, have been on the site for more than 5 years. These are removable if a conflict develops with having a third video-embedded training module running at the same time.

Another potential barrier is the needed administrative support to use local resources to provide these monthly training modules. I anticipate that the local superintendent will continue providing support based on the level of support already provided to me during my doctoral training. The ICT director's primary concern is with the district's account safety. He is particularly cautious about what he allows to be both uploaded and downloaded on the district servers. Those safety concerns may be a barrier to gaining permission to post the monthly modules. The addition of embedded video clips in the training modules will require additional technical support to ensure that the technology will support the project. Because the ICT director was also involved in supporting my doctoral work during the parent's survey data collection process through the district's SurveyMonkey account, I anticipate that he will continue to support this work. I also intend to seek his expertise to ensure that all training modules are clean of any viruses or other potential harm to the server prior to each month's transition to the new training module.

Another potential barrier is needing more campus ICT support than currently provided in the budget at the building level. This support is needed monthly, as training modules are posted and moved on the school's website. Each training module will need to be attached to a link in the App of the Month Curriculum bank to be easily accessible should students or parents want access to a particular module in the future. The local ICT

staff member provided links on each of the district elementary schools' homepages to the parent survey I conducted last spring. He was able to do that within the framework of his building-based assignments, and I anticipate that he will have the same capacity to complete the monthly changes to the curriculum link within the typical schedule of his building-based duties.

Project Implementation Timetable

The timetable of this project study will be 1 calendar year. I will create each of the 12 training modules in advance along with the embedded video clips to demonstrate aspects of each app and safety actions for each month's featured information. Once the chief academic officer of Walden University approves the study, the initial training module is scheduled to run on the website on the 1st day of the following month. On the 1st day of each month, a new training module will replace the previous one highlighted. The consistency of the timeline allows all interested students and parents to learn the methods and structure of the training modules and how to find pertinent information when they are seeking materials (Della Cioppa et al., 2015).

Initial stage. Leading up to the posting of the first module, I will promote the training modules using the school's weekly newsletter and will send out a recorded phone message to all families to alert them to the new tool available on the school's homepage. The weekly newsletter will inform families of the newly designed training modules. A link to training-module icon on the school's home page will be made available in each weekly newsletter, along with directions on how to save the link to a favorites folder for immediate access from any home computer or active Internet device. The objective is to

make monthly access easy and to remind parents in a friendly and informative method when the App of the Month Curriculum module changes.

Because the newsletter was a successful method for garnering participation in the data collection for this study, I anticipate it will successfully alert the target audience of these training opportunities. I also will visit with the PTO to share a demonstration of the use of the training module link to ensure it is user friendly and easily accessible by all regardless of technological skill. Any feedback received from the PTO group will aid in any necessary revisions.

Introduction stage. Once parents are fully aware of the accessibility of the training, modules will begin to be loaded one at a time onto the study school's homepage and accessed through an App of the Month Curriculum icon. After the first 12 modules run, I will evaluate the success of the trainings and assess the problem of continued cyberbullying. I also will analyze the successful implementation of the modules based on feedback from a survey link posted on the 12th monthly module. During the 2nd year, I will make adjustments to the module format and will repost requested training modules along with new training modules for any newly developed social media sites and new, pertinent web-safety information. Also, if the reaction from parents and students is found to be positive and successful, the training modules will be offered to the four other district elementary schools, along with the regional junior and senior high schools to post on their individual websites.

Roles and responsibilities. I am responsible for collaborating with the superintendent, the Internet technology director, the local ICT staff member, and the PTO

president to ensure that all needed support personnel are available and willing to follow through in their individual roles necessary to implement the training modules. These individuals have roles that are clearly defined above; however, obtaining the required permissions and ensuring the technology components are in place, the materials are uploaded and modified on time, and the promotion of the training modules is successful are my sole responsibility.

It is also my responsibility to investigate each social media site, design the written information, and create the video for each monthly training module. I am also responsible for any changes needed to the training modules based on the feedback from committee members or PTO members. After the 1st year, it is my responsibility to evaluate the project's success, to create the survey for parents to provide the needed feedback, and to engage the other district schools in the collaboration for posting the App of the Month Curriculum training modules to their individual websites.

Project Evaluation

The App of the Month Curriculum program will be evaluated through both an outcomes-based evaluation using the statistical data of cyberbullying reports and a formative and summative analysis of the success of the training modules using parental feedback (Cassidy et al., 2013). Both formal and informal bullying and cyberbullying reports will be evaluated to establish the statistical impact of the program on the lives of students, particularly within the framework of the school day. Because the key stakeholders of the school include teachers, students, school committee members (all of whom are parents), and all parents from the community, gaining feedback that will have

the most impact is important. Parent feedback will be utilized to determine programmatic changes needed to the training modules. Students also will have the opportunity to complete anonymous feedback forms on a voluntary basis. These forms will be available in the weekly school newsletter and in the form boxes where students can pick up other anonymous reporting forms.

Outcomes based. By recording the number of bullying and cyberbullying reports in the year before the project begins and 12 months after implementation, collected data can be used to identify any change in the number of reported incidents within the building. The reports from the disaggregated data also can provide information specific to each cyberbullying event and the Internet method used to carry out the cyber activity. These same data will be evaluated 12 months after the program is implemented to determine if any cyberbullying occurred using one of the highlighted Apps of the Month.

Formative. The formative evaluation of the training modules will be informal and will occur before and 6 months after the initial implementation. Before implementation, I will work with the PTO to demonstrate the modules in an online format using the school's computer lab. Immediate feedback from the PTO will allow me to make changes to the training modules before posting them. The focus will be to ensure ease of access, that the training modules are user friendly, and that the information and videos are providing the information and support families need in dealing with the cyber activity of their children. I will have feedback forms available following the PTO on-site training for participants to provide instant feedback while their concerns are still fresh in their minds following their interaction with the training module. Once I evaluate these feedback

forms, any thematic concerns raised will be used to fine-tune the training modules before beginning their posting on the school's website. After 6 months of module utilization, the same feedback forms used by the PTO will be provided to parents in the school's weekly newsletter to see if changes are needed to continue successful implementation of the App of the Month Curriculum.

Summative. The summative evaluation will take place after the 1st year of posting the training modules in monthly increments. As part of the 12th training module, I will use a parent survey link, which I will embed into the training module's home page (Appendix A). The survey will have questions seeking parents' concerns, perceived benefits, future interests, and anonymous comments about the training modules. I will use responses to make changes to the training modules moving forward. Before I share the training modules with the other schools in the district, I will utilize the information from the survey to garner any final input for modifications to the training modules.

Overall goals. The overall goals for each part of the evaluation will be to determine if the training modules act as a deterrent to the problem of cyberbullying and if they are clear and user friendly. These goals will lead to the systematic approach, which was identified as the most successful method for dealing with this multifaceted issue by much of the research (Jäger et al., 2010). Additionally, the goal will be to determine if these training modules can act as the ongoing and easily accessible pipeline of information that parents have expressed a need for at both a local level and in current research (Paterson et al., 2013).

Project Implications

The App of the Month Curriculum has the potential to change the way the local school creates an open and ongoing dialogue with all school constituents about the topic of cyberbullying and cyber activity. Rather than only contacting parents after a cyberbullying event has occurred, the school will have the capacity to filter information to families before a negative cyber experience. When parents are contacted about cyber events, whether they are supportive of the school or not, they are generally emotional or angry, which makes it much more difficult for parents and schools to partner with one another to support educational outcomes. If parents receive cyberbullying information in a free and systematic method of communication from the school before cyber events occur, parent–school partnerships can be established to address such events. Establishing and building these relationships were found to be beneficial to student learning, according to the literature (Robinson, 2012).

This partnership creates the foundation for social change to occur at the local level between parents and the school. The development of this type of relationship will mean that school staff and parents will share common information with students about the harm that cyberbullying can do. Using a collaborative approach, schools and parents can raise students' level of awareness of the harm and dangers that exist in some of the most popular social media sites. Teachers can use these training modules to learn cyber information that is often outside of their scope of knowledge, allowing educators to become a trusted source of information for their students (Schaffhauser, 2014). This

paradigm shift of parents and schools working as a team will be the social change needed to address cyberbullying in a proactive and collaborative manner (Cassidy et al., 2012a).

Another implication applies to the larger context. These training modules can go beyond the local school to help other schools to begin to develop the same parental relationships with their parents and families. If parents view these modules when their children are at the elementary level, they already will be aware of the important content of these trainings and have the opportunity to begin an open dialogue with their children. It is critical that this dialogue occurs before students move to junior or senior high school, as indicated by much of the literature reviewed in Section 2, because students become increasingly hesitant to speak to adults about cyberbullying concerns (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). The social change implication here is that students will go to junior and senior high school with a different perspective and greater knowledge of the potential harm of cyberbullying and dangerous cyber activity, which may impact their choices and cyber behaviors. Because these modules will continue to grow and develop over time, they can target the most current social media and Internet content, with the implication that the trainings will not become obsolete.

Summary

The App of the Month Curriculum training-module project was developed through the careful examination of the mixed methods data collected from both principals and parents about the ongoing issue of cyberbullying and in concert with the current literature demonstrating how adult learners most readily participate in voluntary trainings. Also, the actual concerns of both principals and families about cyberbullying

and cyber activity were highlighted in the training design and targeted information. The popularity and usage of student social media interests were also taken into account when developing the target social media sites that are highlighted by the monthly training modules.

Through both the literature and the research outcomes of this study, the project is designed to have a specific and meaningful impact on the problem of cyberbullying and to be an effective information tool to support appropriate and safe cyber interaction. The implementation of this project is intended to be an ongoing support for students and their parents specifically to address cyber behavior, cyber safety, and cyber awareness. The ongoing evaluation of the project is critical to ensure that the training modules demonstrate their effectiveness and change with the face of social media, an ever-moving target. The importance of social change in the study school is only the beginning of the potential for this project. I fully anticipated the need to modify these training modules and revise the content until they are beneficial to the larger district and potentially beyond, as they become utilized by greater numbers of students and their families.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

Since 2010, formal bullying prevention programs and bullying prevention and intervention policies have been adopted in states across the United States to address increased behaviors of violence and bullying. Since raising the awareness of bullying and addressing how to deal with those behaviors, these programs have some evidence of success based on a decrease in bullying reports across the nation (Robers et al., 2012). However, the same cannot be said for cyberbullying behaviors, and evidence continues to mount that cyberbullying is increasing (Accordino & Accordino, 2011).

This same pattern has played out at the local level at BES. This small, rural elementary school has had great success in dealing with bullying and providing research-based bullying prevention and intervention direct instruction using the Michigan Model for Health program. Since 2010, documentation has demonstrated an average of two formal bullying reports each year. Literature reviews supported the finding that cyberbullying is a growing issue. The research completed in this study also indicated that all of the local elementary principals perceive that cyberbullying continues to grow at all of the rural schools that make up the district. Additionally, the review of the qualitative data from the study demonstrated that the Michigan Model for Health alone is not sufficient for training students about the dangers of the Internet or the significance of the harm caused when students experience cyberbullying.

The project that I created based on the research of this study and the two literature reviews is the App of the Month Curriculum. In this section, I reflect on the strengths of

this project and reflect on the format and accessibility of the training modules. I also consider potential improvements to the project as well as the limitations of the modules. My focus is on the process I went through as I became a scholarly writer and researcher and the steps I took to develop the project. I also explain the potential for future research specifically to address the concern of cyberbullying with elementary-aged students.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

The App of the Month Curriculum has a principal strength of allowing instantaneous access to intervention support from any Internet-capable device. The importance of this strength is that both parents and students have the opportunity to find critical information at any time of the night or day and in any location with cellular service or Internet access. Immediate accessibility of intervention materials is critical to providing effective support (Della Cioppa et al., 2015). Because cyberbullying can cause harm 24 hours a day, students can find themselves in a situation where they are frightened or confused and feel unwilling or unable to seek out an adult for support (Snakenborg et al., 2011). In this situation, the App of the Month Curriculum can provide information that will guide a student to appropriate support systems or safety tools. When a parent or student is in crisis because of a cyberbullying issue, the immediacy of access to that information may minimize the significant harm caused by cyberbullying (Price & Dalgleish, 2010).

In addition to the continual availability of the curriculum modules, another strength of the App of the Month Curriculum project is that it provides a storehouse of

Internet safety information that highlights potential harm. The storehouse will contain a developing collection of modules targeting specific social media sites and will continue to be available to parents and students long after they air as the monthly training. The storehouse component of the project means that the curriculum will have an ongoing impact on students and their families long after the publication of this study.

Furthermore, the literature clearly supports my concern that cyberbullying is an increasing problem in schools around the country, and the principals from the focus group all felt that cyberbullying was impacting their individual schools. Evidence has supported that this type of tool is beneficial to the social change of any school or school district (Paterson et al., 2013).

The final strength of this project is that it can continue to develop over time and perpetually provide new information for families. With an environment like cyberspace that is always changing, flexibility is an important component. A year after the initiation of the App of the Month Curriculum module project, new apps likely will be popular that did not exist during the implementation stage of the project. The goal is for the project to capture new social media sites in up-to-date modules. I will add modules that introduce the new social media sites as they continue to develop and expand.

Project Limitations

The creation of the project took place after significant research and the review of nearly 10 years of literature; however, the project has a few significant limitations. Based on the student data and the literature, the project was designed to meet the needs of students, but there is no direct evidence that students would use an App of the Month

Curriculum link on a school website. No literature was found that would indicate that a link such as this would be attractive to children. Some evidence suggests that parents use the school's website regularly to access the PTO link and the school newsletter; however, there is no evidence that the students ever utilize the website.

Another limitation of this project is the dependence on the researcher to continue the implementation of the curriculum modules over time. As an improvement to the design, the App of the Month Curriculum modules could have a bank of trainings ready in advance so they would only need loading rather than continued design. The literature also indicated that should a web-based instructional model be used, video material is clearly the most effective method for providing training. Although these modules have video clips, they are delivered in monthly intervals and do not have the impact of a full 2- to 3-day workshop. These clips will require the participant to return month after month to learn all of the information presented each year.

Finally, the project does not allow for face-to-face intervention and support. If a student is in crisis and the App of the Month Curriculum link does not support the student's particular need at that time, he or she may go away from the module more confused and may not turn to an adult for help. Given the potential for disastrous consequences, an additional safety measure is a toll-free crisis hotline number included on each of the App of the Month Curriculum web pages.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

After the data were analyzed and a pattern of cyberbullying concern began to arise, the project was designed to meet the needs of children and their families to enable

them to face the challenges of cyberbullying. The project focuses on web-based support. However, this problem could have been addressed by utilizing an additional research-based cyberbullying intervention and prevention program during the school day. Having teachers make such a program part of the instructional day would ensure that all of the students would receive the training and that all students would have a consistent message as well as consistent language when learning about cyberbullying. Results would include continued assessment of the problem, which might determine if the issue is one of peer conflict or power struggles among peers, as opposed to true cyberbullying.

In addition to school-day instruction for students, another option is an on-site workshop for families that could occur after school hours at the study school. This could be a 1-, 2-, or 3-night workshop that would teach parents and students about the safety features available on the Internet and in a number of the social media websites utilized by students. This type of training could contain information about the potential harm of cyberbullying and its impact on children. A program such as this would have the most impact if packets of materials went home with families to be available for future use if cyberbullying problems were to arise. This type of program would include highly focused information and would put parents and students in the same room as the educators, allowing face-to-face instruction and question-and-answer opportunities.

Scholarship, Project Development, Leadership, and Change

The process of conducting doctoral level research was a daunting and much larger task than I ever realized when I set out on this journey over 5 years ago. Some stages required far more time and in-depth investigation than I anticipated. The actual time

frames for performing effective research, writing about the findings and results, and completing a doctoral-level project took years instead of months and required me to reflect carefully and authentically after each stage. At several stages in the process, I needed to return to the quantitative analysis to revise the results.

Scholarship

One part of the process that took a much more in-depth understanding than I originally realized was the concept of saturation of the literature. I began my study of cyberbullying looking at the topic from a comprehensive viewpoint. This global understanding of cyberbullying had no theoretical perspective and was focused narrowly on my local problem through the lens of a global issue. I quickly had to learn to concentrate my exploration of the literature to find resources that looked at my problem from a variety of vantage points and perspectives. Conversely, I had to widen my understanding of what was actually happening at my local level to consider the issue through the much larger problem of bullying and how these behaviors are carried out through the guise of cyberbullying. The journey took me through thousands of articles, books, doctoral studies, and governmental websites. I learned to sift through mounds of information and save what brought meaning and understanding to my research while quickly discarding what did not inform my study.

I also learned that for doctoral-level scholarship, the researcher needs—more than any other trait—to be open minded in order to gain focused understanding with fidelity, and to be able to use that to build capacity to complete the work. By opting to do mixed methods research, I was truly undertaking more than I ever realized. Each sequence

required me to examine my preparation, my implementation, and the outcomes of my research using unique methods. Based on my research design, I had to work on each method, qualitative and quantitative, simultaneously while still developing each sequence independently. This was the only way I could ensure that both methods were effective in collecting data and that both were focused on the research questions that were answered by each sequence.

Project Development

When I think about the extra time that was taken to complete a mixed methods study, I wonder if I should have made a different choice. However, when I look at the impact on my project that the qualitative research has had, I cannot see any way for it to have been completed without significant components missing from the final outcome. Then again, as I consider the project, minus the results of the quantitative research, I would have had nothing to guide my understanding of what parents actually perceive their children are dealing with in facing the very real threat of cyberbullying.

I had to have both the qualitative and the quantitative components of my research to clearly inform my project and to truly make a difference in the lives of my students. The validity of this approach may impact the lives of children beyond my own school who are eventually granted access to the resulting curriculum modules. Without authentically addressing my school's problem and thereby having a significant impact on that problem, there was not sufficient reason for me to take on the monumental challenge of a doctoral-level program.

Leadership and Change

I certainly have taken on a leadership role in addressing the issue of cyberbullying by investigating the problem through the experiences of the elementary-age child. Cyberbullying as an entire phenomenon is still in its infancy regarding the scope of the amount of research completed, but cyberbullying research prior to the middle school or junior high school level is nearly nonexistent. However, I found evidence that the accessibility to Internet-capable devices has increased at the elementary level for students across the country and even around the world.

This finding supports what I found at my local level. Students as young as those in third grade often come to school with cellular telephones. Children are given access to a hand-held computer long before they are ever trained regarding the potential dangers of that type of device. By researching this group of younger children, I have discovered the concerns of parents, principals, and students when dealing with the issue of cyberbullying and have worked to create a tool that will provide intervention support and prevention training for families. After the 1st year of implementation, I plan to share the tool I developed with other schools. This has the potential of impacting the lives of hundreds and possibly thousands of children.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

At the onset of my journey as a doctoral student, I considered myself a scholarly individual. I took my job as an elementary school principal, my own learning, and the learning of my staff and my students seriously. Through my doctoral coursework and collegial discussion opportunities, I discovered an entirely different level of scholarship.

Because of this work and interactive collegial discussions with my chair and my second reader, I have found that scholarship goes far beyond becoming an expert in a field. I have discovered that doctoral-level scholarship takes an individual to the point of initiating new learning in a field through data that can posit a new understanding of that information.

My literature reviews were the most eye-opening aspects of the doctoral journey. I found that before I could begin to address cyberbullying in a way that would lead to new learning, I had to completely and honestly immerse myself in the full scope of the knowledge base that already exists. This came to mean that my Boolean searches of data, prior research, and topic information had to expand to include subtopics of the problem I studied. I had to include learning that went beyond the specific to the broad and then synthesize all of that understanding to bring it back to the specific. This was a true challenge yet made me a much better researcher. I now believe that I could tackle any problem through the collection and use of data and the analysis of those data. This journey has forever impacted my abilities as a scholar and has opened the door for me to be a better educational leader at all levels.

Analysis of Self as Researcher

As a decade-long teacher, and then a 12-year veteran principal, I have come to hone in on issues and situations that impact student learning. As 21st century educators, we are assisted by an unprecedented amount of research conducted on academic student support. At this time in history, the impact of social and emotional needs is the focus for educators across the nation. These needs have played out in many ways that are directly

related to student learning; however, one way that has been difficult to monitor and address is the issue of cyberbullying. I have seen this issue impact my students at school, but the direct evidence is thin. This doctoral process has afforded me the opportunity to look at a serious off-campus behavior, which is not my purview, through the lens of on-campus impact. I have worked to address this issue for my students in a way that will give them nonthreatening information, support, and answers to many cyber questions. I have never been able to do this before, as my position requires that I only involve myself with the problems of students while they are in my custody.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

My second literature review clearly guided the format and direction of my project. It intensified and complicated my project from the simple, "Let me do a 2-day workshop" model to an integrated yearlong, and possibly longer, intervention tool. At first I was concerned about the amount of time and work that were necessary to ensure that this project would be completed in a timely fashion. After questioning myself as an authentic learner, and the entire purpose of my doctoral work, I determined that I would find a way to complete this project with all of the components necessary to create something that would genuinely assist and support students and their families. I am also satisfied that this project has the true capacity for important social change at a local level, and then at a greater level as the tool is shared with other schools beyond my personal campus. I propose that this tool will have the capacity for perpetual impact; although it needs continual updating, that in itself is a strength because the tool will remain conversant with ever-changing technology. Because of the topic of my study and the pace at which cyber

technology is changing, the project's ongoing capacity for student and family support has significantly enhanced my final project.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

As I began my doctoral process, I was focused on completing a degree that would move me to the next level of educational leadership. Although this is an appropriate and honorable goal, this completely evolved through my Walden experience. As I began working on what I thought would be a standard dissertation, I quickly realized that I would have to be reflective and authentic in evaluating my own practice and the concerns that were impacting that practice. I also realized that after honing in on my individual school's target problem, I then would need to determine how valuable the study of that problem was to the educational world at large. It was then that I began to understand what the Walden mantra of social change really meant. I was able to see how my part in doctoral-level scholarship had to include my consideration of the world around me and how I had the potential to change that world for the better.

The next stream of learning came through investigating my current problem through the lens of historic concerns that fostered prior research. Specifically, that meant that I had to research cyberbullying through the perspective of, and theories about, bullying. When exploring bullying I had to delve into its causes, impact, and solutions. Only then was I able to formulate a framework and foundation for my research about cyberbullying. I was able to connect with Bandura's (2005) social cognitive theory, which allowed me to understand that research has evidenced that school influences do make a difference to a child's development and positive growth in self-efficacy (Ferrari

et al., 2010). Research, both historical and recent, has revealed that this work has a potential to positively impact student behavior and responses to harmful behavior by others.

Another unanticipated development for me was the level of support and connection that I had to rely on through my cohort and my chair. Because this was an online study model, I expected to work mostly alone and then turn my work in at the end of each semester to have it reviewed and returned for quick fixes before the next semester. As I bit off more chunks of the rubric while participating in my cohort dialogues, I realized the process was intense and that I would never succeed on my own. I came to understand that being a good writer and a good reader was not enough. Without didactic exchange, I simply could not understand the nuances of the process, and I would never be able to achieve the depth of understanding needed to conduct doctoral-level research.

In addition to the work itself, many times I felt overwhelmed and sensed that I would never make it through such a demanding program. Yet, looking back I can see that the program, though arduous, was designed for me to succeed. My colleagues encouraged me, and I have had the opportunity to return that encouragement on many occasions. I also have reflected on the importance of the stabilizing force in all of our lives during this journey. That is, of course, our doctoral chair. She was always able to soften the blow when the work was weak and without merit and to encourage me to take a different approach and try again with fidelity. She reminded me that the fourth, fifth, and sixth round of revisions of any given section took me one step closer to the end goal, and that

each time the work was better and the revisions fewer. Rarely was she stern, and then only when necessary because an attitude needed to reset from negativity to positivity.

I also learned that the doctoral rubric was a critical component to my work and its outcomes. Each time I would veer away from the rubric, or forget to be faithful to its tenets, I would find gaps in my learning and my outcomes. I had to carefully examine the rubric to understand the meaning of saturation, social change implications, critical interconnected analysis, and other specific directives. The rubric kept me grounded, but only when I authentically followed the critical aspects as outlined in its pages.

This research study and the resulting project are practical in scope and will have a practical application in addressing cyberbullying in my school. I am an administrator who believes strongly in the use of data to drive instruction. For over 5 years I have led my staff in utilizing data to determine students' individual learning needs. Academic interventions have been decided based on data that have been disaggregated and discussed at team meetings. I have noticed that as my rigor of research and data analysis increased with my doctoral study, so too did my level of expectation increase for rigorous data collection of student outcomes. I led the staff in selecting new assessment and progress-monitoring tools and now have a greater understanding of the benchmarks and cut scores produced by these tools.

My doctoral work now has the opportunity to prosper and inform new learning about the topic of cyberbullying with the elementary-age student. I have only reached this point with hard work, supportive scholarly colleagues, a family who allowed me time to

learn in isolation from them, and a doctoral chair who would not give up on me when at times I wanted to give up on myself.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

At the beginning of my doctoral journey I did not consider the need for a cyberbullying intervention tool. Because of significant bullying in Massachusetts schools as well as schools across the nation, legislation was passed mandating that a formal bullying prevention and intervention policy be adopted in each district. Additionally, research-based curriculum materials had to be utilized to address this serious issue through direct instruction beginning in kindergarten. As a veteran principal, I expected this selected program, the Michigan Model for Health, to address the issue of bullying and cyberbullying at my local school and to provide a solution for keeping my students safe and informed.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Shortly after implementing the Michigan Model for Health program, I quickly realized that the program provided students with multiple lessons about the impact of bullying, how to advocate in a face-to-face environment to stop bullying and cease acting as a bystander, and how to react effectively to bullying and report it to those in authority. Cyberbullying, however, was addressed in a single lesson in the program content and did not result in a decrease in cyberbullying activity. In fact, cyberbullying reporting continued to increase each year during my doctoral coursework. This led me to quickly decide that in order to bring about significant positive social change in the area of cyberbullying I needed to address the social and emotional needs of my students and to

inform their parents of these growing concerns. I also realized that I needed to understand cyberbullying at its core and to address the issue in an entirely different manner than the utilization of the current curriculum materials targeting school-based bullying.

The development of the App of the Month Curriculum has the potential to bring about social change at a local level and beyond and to touch the lives of children at all levels of learning. It has the power to inform students and their families about the positive potential for social media usage and provides the safeguards for proper Internet usage. The App of the Month Curriculum also teaches the appropriate responses to the dangers and impact of cyberbullying. By reimagining these training modules to an online environment, not only is this information easily and readily accessible, it also allows access even when students have long moved on from the elementary school campus. The ability to advertise these modules and make them easily accessible through an online link to anyone who needs the information gives the project its greatest potential for social change.

Once children and families are taught how to utilize the modules, social change likely will occur as cyberbullying activity decreases and appropriate usage of social media apps increases. Parents are expected to be more aware of the numbers of students who do not share cyberbullying experiences with their families and to use this information to take a more diligent position in monitoring Internet and social media activity. With parents having clear instruction on how to place safety protocols on Internet-accessible personal devices, parents will have a greater ability to supervise children's Internet activities and accessibility for specific applications.

The research has great capacity to inform future research about cyberbullying with younger children. The study findings that younger children are gaining access to Internet-capable personal devices has changed the face of cyberbullying and has indicated that interventions are needed at much younger ages than in the recent past. Those who wish to carry this research to the next level have evidence that elementary-age children are impacted by cyberbullying at ever-increasing levels without having the developmental awareness of cyberbullying dangers or the potential for harm.

This study also has added to the learning about cyberbullying and the elementary-age student. Specific research has evidenced that cyberbullying at all levels of academic learning has affected a student's ability to access the curriculum by impacting student attendance, grades, social relationships, and the social and emotional well-being of children (Samer & Patchin, 2011). The primary reason elementary school students are positively impacted by this study is that it has evidenced the increase in cyberbullying activity with students at this age, as well as an increase in Internet usage due to the increase in accessibility to Internet-capable devices.

Applications to Practice

The time constraints on educators are more demanding than at any time in my 20-year career. The App of the Month Curriculum project is designed to support student behaviors and social-emotional well-being in such a manner as to allow educators to focus on teaching and students to focus on learning. The research clearly has shown how bullying in general and cyberbullying in particular have impacted the learning environment and have stolen precious moments of instructional time from the academic

process. This research study has taken on the challenge of identifying cyberbullying activity at the local level and within the framework of an elementary school environment. The potential impact to the classroom is directly related to the support that students and families will receive by the project.

I am convinced that the App of the Month Curriculum project will have wide-reaching appeal for students and families based on the fact that the project is supporting learning about high-interest Internet applications. Because parents are not always sure of their own knowledge and understanding of the cyber world, I expect that this tool will give them the information they need to act as their child's advocate, whether online or in person. I expect this tool to have an extended impact of support, and though it may change over time, I anticipate that the interest will be shared from parent to parent, as well as student to student. There is every reason to believe that this tool will be able to go far beyond a few workshops to inform, empower, and assist families to live safer, happier lives in the cyber world.

Directions for Future Research

Because of the limited research on elementary-age cyberbullying activity, more research is needed to inform this phenomenon. The research from this study clearly indicated that all participating principals were concerned about the impact of cyberbullying at their individual schools. Further, parents of students in Grades 4–6 felt that their children were more impacted by cyberbullying activity than parents of students in Grades K–3. Many parents from both participation groups indicated an interest in having training for their children about cyberbullying and cyber safety.

One possible direction to go would be to target large, urban school districts where the participant pool would increase substantially. In such a setting, elementary school students could participate anonymously or with parental opt-in permission slips. Such research likely would be with fifth- and sixth-grade students, and it would be informative to have a group of parents and a group of students from these grade levels participate as families. Parents and children would both be able to maintain privacy for their responses, but then a comparison of the responses between the two groups could be very telling as to what parents perceive as cyber activity engaged in by their children, compared to the students' actual experienced (shared anonymously). The methodology for this research could take on a participatory action research design, which could address this very real social problem (Creswell, 2012).

Should this research focus on parent awareness of cyber activity with children of elementary school age and utilize comparable data from students, findings could begin to indicate any disconnect between parent awareness and actual cyberbullying activity. Also, research should include cyberbullying activity among elementary-age children and parents who have participated in cyber safety and cyberbullying intervention trainings, as compared to corresponding groups who have not participated in those trainings. It is important to determine if parents of young children are as aware of cyberbullying activity as they think they are.

Equally important is determining if cyberbullying prevention and intervention tools that directly target cyber safety and cyber awareness make a significant impact in positive cyber activity behaviors of students as compared with students who do not

participate in the trainings. Such research could be repeated in a longitudinal study to determine if these same two groups—those families, children and parents, who did participate in the trainings as compared with those who did not—had significantly different cyber experiences in junior high school, and then again in senior high school. The ultimate goal should be to determine if early training at elementary school age acts as a key intervention strategy for impacting the frequency with which children engage in cyberbullying activity as they make their way through the educational system.

Summary

In Section 4 of this study I was able to reflect on my entire doctoral journey and establish the strengths of the resulting project, which was created based on the mixed methods research produced by collection of both the qualitative and quantitative data. Along with the project strengths, I carefully considered its limitations. From those limitations, I recommended alternate ways to address the issue of cyberbullying for students at the elementary school level. I determined that site-based trainings would benefit families due to hard-copy materials being provided and that the face-to-face nature of that type of training may be more impactful to those who attend. I also came to consider the lack of evidence that students use the school website for any current purpose. Thus, a project link on the website may not have the greatest draw for students.

After considering my project outcome, I was able to reflect on the actual learning that took place during my doctoral study. I found that my ability to conduct doctoral-level research and complete this same level of data analysis have profoundly increased during this doctoral program. I have identified the importance of this work and how it will have

a significant impact on positive social change for local students, with further capacity to filter out to other schools for an impact beyond the study school. The doctoral process has defined within me a new understanding of research and data and has opened doors that will improve my effectiveness as an academic leader. After completing this process, my value as a practitioner has significantly increased due to my learning opportunity at Walden.

When considering the project that is the result of this study, easy access to the material is key. Multiple methods must be utilized to make families aware of the App of the Month Curriculum tool and to provide them access through all Internet-accessible devices. More importantly, the implications of social and emotional support for families that will come from this project at a no-cost, easily accessible web-based application should not be underestimated.

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Appendix A: The Project Handouts and Questionnaire

Supporting Video Handout Packet

Minutes 0:00-0:30 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

This handout will support you viewing of the "App of the Month" Curriculum Module video.

It is designed for parents and students to view independently or together with opportunities for reflection and/or discussion. Please use the handout to take notes.

Along the way you will see the following note **(Take 5:)** This will alert you that it is time to stop and reflect or discuss and it will give you specific guidelines as to how to use that time.

PLEASE ALLOW 90 MINUTES TO COMPLETE THE SESSION WITH FIDELITY

If you complete the video using the reflection and discussion opportunities, and then complete the follow up reflection questionnaire it will take you approximately 90 minutes to complete the session.

Retrieved from

https://www.facebook.com/

Minutes 0:30 to 1:00 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

To begin with, let's investigate this month's App of the Month and define its purpose.

All of the information for this video will be taken from the Facebook website, or will be cited through specific references.

Facebook was Founded in 2004 for the purpose of allowing people to connect with one another on a web based platform, and to share the events of their lives using words, pictures, and videos.

Retrieved from

https://www.facebook.com/

Minutes 1:00 to 1:45 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

Facebook clearly indicates a set of guidelines and policies that they label as their Community Standards.

They encourage individuals to make them aware of inappropriate content which they will remove if reported.

However, they warn that individual subject matter that is disagreeable to one person, may not offend another and will therefore not be in conflict with their Community Standards.

Retrieved from

https://www.facebook.com/

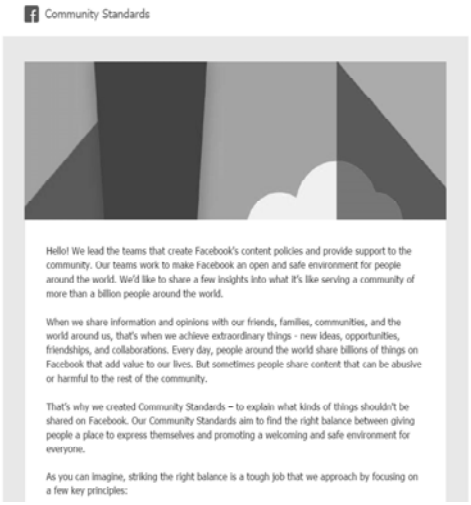
Minutes 1:45 to 2:45 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

Community Standards letter
by Monika Bickert, Facebook's
Head of Global Product Policy,
and Justin Osofsky, their Vice
President of Global Operations.

That's why we created Community Standards – to explain what kinds of things shouldn't be shared on Facebook. Our Community Standards aim to find the right balance between giving people a place to express themselves and promoting a welcoming and safe environment for everyone.

As you can imagine, striking the right balance is a tough job. They explain their method for doing this is to focus on a few key principles:


Community Standards

Hello! We lead the teams that create Facebook's content policies and provide support to the community. Our teams work to make Facebook an open and safe environment for people around the world. We'd like to share a few insights into what it's like serving a community of more than a billion people around the world.

When we share information and opinions with our friends, families, communities, and the world around us, that's when we achieve extraordinary things - new ideas, opportunities, friendships, and collaborations. Every day, people around the world share billions of things on Facebook that add value to our lives. But sometimes people share content that can be abusive or harmful to the rest of the community.

That's why we created Community Standards – to explain what kinds of things shouldn't be shared on Facebook. Our Community Standards aim to find the right balance between giving people a place to express themselves and promoting a welcoming and safe environment for everyone.

As you can imagine, striking the right balance is a tough job that we approach by focusing on a few key principles:

Retrieved from
https://www.facebook.com/

Minutes 2:45 to 3:50 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

Facebook begins by highlighting safety as its primary concern. In fact, they express a zero tolerance policy for violence or bullying.

We have zero tolerance for any behavior that puts people in danger, whether someone is organizing or advocating real-world violence or bullying other people.

Acknowledging cultural diversity. To ensure our policies reflect the diversity of our community, and we consider the context through which people share content on Facebook.

Take 5: Stop the video and reflect upon any cultural differences which may be displayed on Facebook which may be uncomfortable for you. Write or discuss what these might be and write your observations below.


Community Standards

Hello! We lead the teams that create Facebook's content policies and provide support to the community. Our teams work to make Facebook an open and safe environment for people around the world. We'd like to share a few insights into what it's like serving a community of more than a billion people around the world.

When we share information and opinions with our friends, families, communities, and the world around us, that's when we achieve extraordinary things - new ideas, opportunities, friendships, and collaborations. Every day, people around the world share billions of things on Facebook that add value to our lives. But sometimes people share content that can be abusive or harmful to the rest of the community.

That's why we created Community Standards – to explain what kinds of things shouldn't be shared on Facebook. Our Community Standards aim to find the right balance between giving people a place to express themselves and promoting a welcoming and safe environment for everyone.

As you can imagine, striking the right balance is a tough job that we approach by focusing on a few key principles:

Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/

Minutes 3:50 to 5:05 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

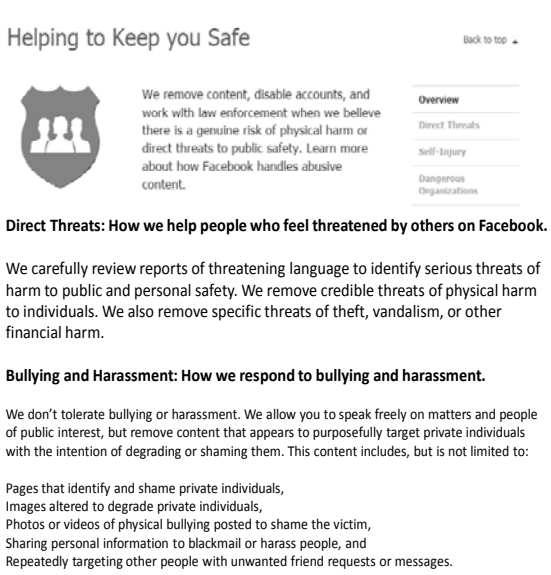
Facebook begins by highlighting safety as its primary concern. In fact, they express a zero tolerance policy for violence or bullying.

We have zero tolerance for any behavior that puts people in danger, whether someone is organizing or advocating real-world violence or bullying other people.

Acknowledging cultural diversity. To ensure our policies reflect the diversity of our community, and we consider the context through which people share content on Facebook.

Take 5: Stop the video and reflect upon any cyber activity you have had that made you feel threatened or bullied. Write or discuss these events and if they meet the criterion that Facebook has set for defining these safety issues.

Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/



Minutes 5:05 to 5:40 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

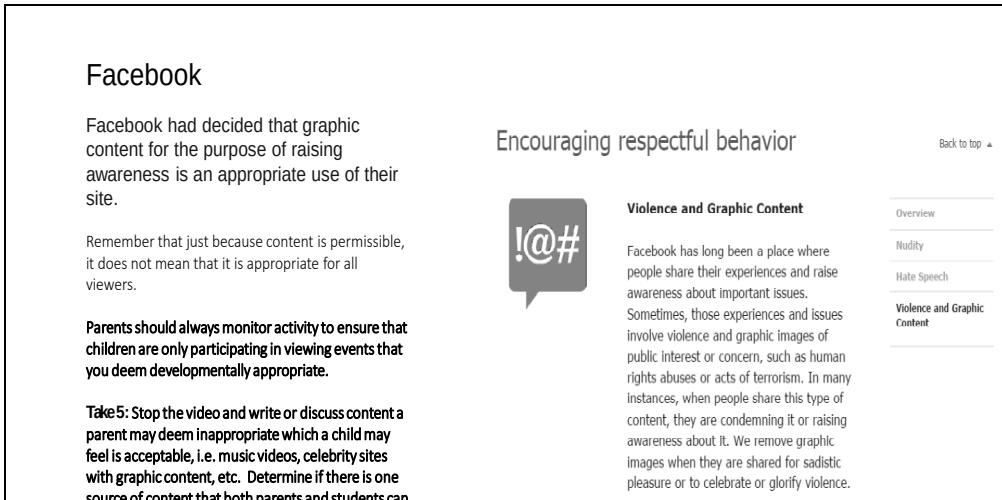
Facebook had decided that graphic content for the purpose of raising awareness is an appropriate use of their site.

Remember that just because content is permissible, it does not mean that it is appropriate for all viewers.

Parents should always monitor activity to ensure that children are only participating in viewing events that you deem developmentally appropriate.

Take 5: Stop the video and write or discuss content a parent may deem inappropriate which a child may feel is acceptable, i.e. music videos, celebrity sites with graphic content, etc. Determine if there is one source of content that both parents and students can compromise about.

Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/



Minutes 5:40 to 6:30 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

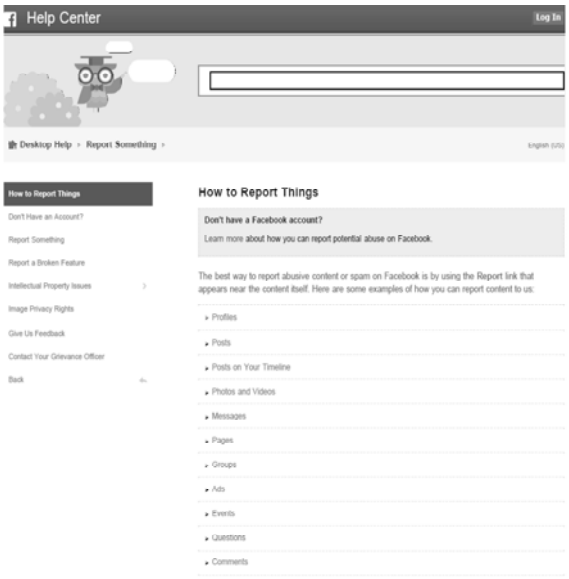
Facebook has an abuse center that will help when unsafe activity occurs on their site.

To report inappropriate or unsafe activity you can use the following link or go through the Help Center:
https://www.facebook.com/help/181495968648557

If you see something on Facebook that you believe violates our terms, please report it to us. We have dedicated teams working around the world to review things you report to help make sure Facebook remains safe (https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards/#).

Take 5: Stop the video and write or discuss whether the cyber activity that you considered on the previous page is something you would report moving forward. Why or why not?

Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/



Minutes 6.30 to 8:45 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

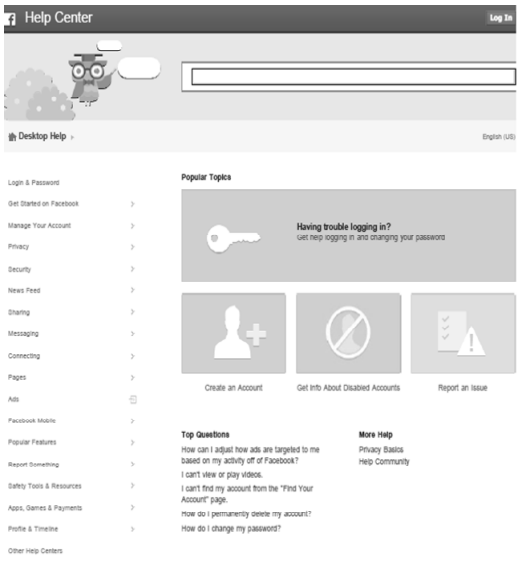
Facebook has a Help Center that will teach you how to manage and protect your account.

The first important note about creating new accounts is that an account user must be 13 years of age to have a personal account.

Once accounts are created parents will not have access to their children's accounts. Parents can monitor their child's postings if the child accepts their parent as a friend on the account.

Take5: Stop the video and write or discuss the reasons that Facebook has the mandatory age requirement for their site. Do you agree or disagree with this rule? Why or why not?

Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/



Minutes 8:45 to 14:30 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

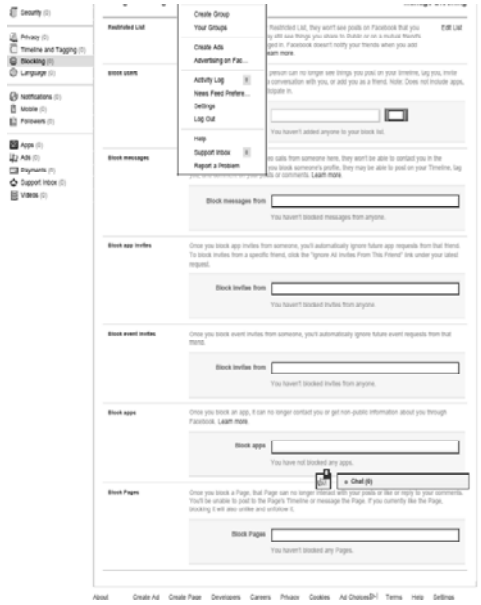
In the Help Center Facebook provides safety information in a tab labeled Safety Tabs and Resources.

If you decide to create an account or manage your current account with different safety features, take note from this section of the video on the lines below.

This tab will give you information on how to manage your security settings, your privacy settings, your timeline and tagging privileges, and your blocking settings. The video will take you through each of these setting options to determine how to best manage your own account.

Take 5 + 5: Stop the video and use the next ten minutes to create an account or to review your current account settings. Be sure to make changes based on your new learning. Remember this can be done through a tablet, an Internet Ready Cell Phone, or any Internet Accessible device.

Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/



Minutes 14.30 to 22:00 of the App of the Month September Video

Facebook

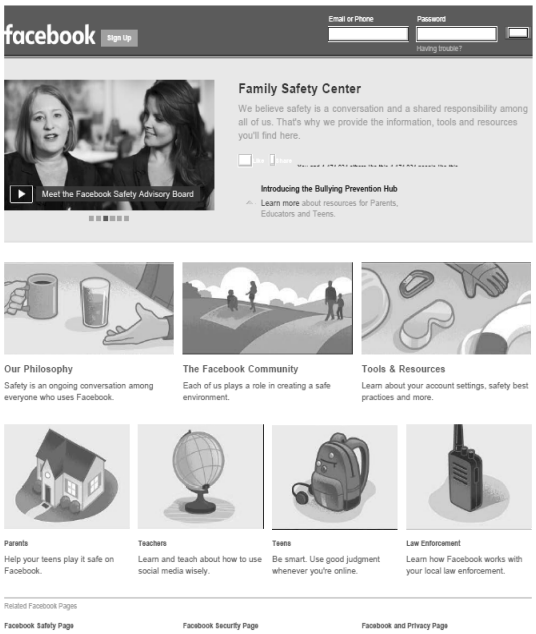
Facebook also provides a Family Safety Center. You can find this at https://www.facebook.com/safety

Please take time to visit the Family Safety Center to Review the important features that can keep you and your children safe while using Facebook.

This tab will give you information on how to manage your security settings, your privacy settings, your timeline and tagging privileges, and your blocking settings. The video will take you through each of these setting options to determine how to best manage your own account.

Take 5 + 5 + 5: Stop the video and use the next 15 minutes to review both the Parent and the Teen Safety links. Write or discuss one new thing you learned from one of the links.

Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/



Video Reflection Questionaire

The purpose of setting up a Facebook account is to share:

☐ Video, ☐ Pictures, ☐ Words, ☐ All of the Above (For help refer to Minutes 0:30 – 1:00 of the video)

Facebook has a set of policies that guide their content. These policies are called their Community Standards and they include information on:

☐ Funding & Purchasing, ☐ Design Tools, ☐ Inappropriate Content, ☐ All of the Above (For help refer to Minutes 1 – 1:45 of the video)

Facebook a zero tolerance policy for what behavior:

☐ Drug abuse, ☐ Criticism of Public Figures, ☐ Advocating Violence, ☐ All of the Above (For help refer to Minutes 2:45 - 3:50 of the video)

The age at which an individual can establish a Facebook account is:

☐ 10, ☐ 12 , ☐ 16, ☐ 13 (For help refer to Minutes 6:30 - 8:45 of the video)

Each can account use can manage the following settings: (Click all that apply)

☐ Blocking, ☐ Privacy, ☐ Security, ☐ Background Color (For help refer to Minutes 8 :45– 14:30 of the video)

Facebook has a Family Safety Center that provides links for the following:

☐ Parents, ☐ Teachers, ☐ Teens, ☐ The Facebook Community (For help refer to Minutes 14:30 - 22:00 of the video – Go to the Family Safety Center)

In the Parent Link, Facebook indicates that the best way to support a child's safety on the internet is by:

☐ Parent Blocking Tools, ☐ Daily History Checks, ☐ Communication, ☐ All of the Above (For help refer to Minutes 14:30 - 22:00 of the video – Go to the Parent Link)

In the Parent Link, Facebook recommends that parents not be afraid to ask their children to:

☐ Explain new technology to them, ☐ Be kind on the internet, ☐ Use go manners on the internet, ☐ All of the Above (For help refer to Minutes 14:30 - 22:00 of the video - Go to the Parent Link)

In the Teen Link, Facebook reminds teens to:

☐ Act cool while Online, ☐ Represent themselves as the kind of person they want to be, ☐ Monitor what everyone is doing while Online, ☐ All of the Above (For help refer to Minutes 14:30 - 22:00 of the video - Go to the Teen Link)

In the Teen Link, Facebook reminds teens to:

☐ Always be serious while posting, ☐ Try to be funny during posts, ☐ Think before you post, ☐ All of the Above (For help refer to Minutes 14:30 - 22:00 of the video – Go to the Teen Link)

Video Reflection Questionaire (Answer Key)

The purpose of setting up a Facebook account is to share:

☐ Video, ☐ Pictures, ☐ Words, ☒ All of the Above (For help refer to Minutes 0:30 – 1:00 of the video)

Facebook has a set of policies that guide their content. These policies are called their Community Standards and they include information on:

☐ Funding & Purchasing, ☐ Design Tools, ☒ Inappropriate Content, ☐ All of the Above (For help refer to Minutes 1 – 1:45 of the video)

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The age at which an individual can establish a Facebook account is:

☒ 10, ☐ 12 , ☐ 16, ☒13 (For help refer to Minutes 6:30 - 8:45 of the video)

Each can account use can manage the following settings: (Click all that apply)

☒ Blocking, ☒ Privacy, ☒ Security, ☐ Background Color (For help refer to Minutes 8 :45– 14:30 of the video)

Facebook has a Family Safety Center that provides links for the following: (Click all that apply)

☒ Parents, ☒ Teachers, ☒ Teens, ☒The Facebook Community (For help refer to Minutes 14:30 - 22:00 of the video – Go to the Family Safety Center)

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In the Teen Link, Facebook reminds teens to:

☐ Always be serious while posting, ☐ Try to be funny during posts, ☒ Think before you post, ☐ All of the Above (For help refer to Minutes 14:30 - 22:00 of the video – Go to the Teen Link)

App of the Month – First Year Outline

October App of the Mont- Twitter

The defined purpose for Twitter is to allow its users the opportunity to quickly upload short posts called Tweets which include pictures or videos to anyone who is a follower of their individual accounts.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  National Center for Education Statistics found that 71% of American youth conceded to having been cyberbullied within the previous 12 months on at least one occasion (Robers et al., 2013). Share your experience with a friend to help them learn how to get help.

- Twitter Training Video with References
- Twitter Supporting Video Handouts
- Twitter Reflection Questionnaire
- Twitter Reflection Questionnaire Answer Key

November App of the Month - IM (Instant Messaging)

The defined purpose for IM is to quickly interact with anyone on your buddy list through text format. Both parties are able to quickly see the ongoing conversation that is occurring in real-time.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  Pettalia et al. (2013) found that 50% of participants admitted to cyberbullying. Don't let yourself fall into the trap of being a cyberbully.

- IM Video with References
- IM Supporting Video Handouts
- IM Reflection Questionnaire
- IM Reflection Questionnaire Answer Key

December "App of the Month" Instagram

The defined purpose for Instagram is an online app which allow its users to instantly share pictures or videos in either a public or a private forum.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  Sahin (2012) found 97% of American students indicated they had daily access to
  the internet. Parents, if your child has a cellular phone, a tablet, or internet accessible game consoles they do have access to the internet.

- Instagram Training Video with References
- Instagram Supporting Video Handouts
- Instagram Reflection Questionnaire
- Instagram Reflection Questionnaire Answer Key

January App of the Month- YouTube

The defined purpose for YouTube is as a website which has global access to individual users who wish to upload and broadcast privately and commercially created videos.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  78% of cyberbullied students said their self-esteem was impacted, 35% felt their grades were negatively affected, 28% said they were avoiding school and their attendance suffered, and 19% believed they experienced harm in their relationships with family members (Price & Dalgleish).

- YouTube Training Video with References
- YouTube Supporting Video Handouts
- YouTube Reflection Questionnaire
- YouTube Reflection Questionnaire Answer Key

February App of the Month- Kik

The defined purpose for the Kik app allows individuals to use their data plan to receive and send messages, videos, pictures, and other content anonymously from their cellular telephone.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  75% of cyberbullied students said they felt sad, 58% were frustrated, and 48% were embarrassed (Price & Dalgleish, 2010).
  It really does hurt when you cyberbully someone!

- KikTraining Video with References
- KikSupporting Video Handouts
- KikReflection Questionnaire
- KikReflection Questionnaire Answer Key

March App of the Month- Snap Chat

The defined purpose for Snap Chat is to allow its users "chat" with others using photos, videos or captions which will "self-destruct" seconds after the receiver has viewed the image.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  Whereas typical bullying can be perpetrated through the perception of physical strength, popularity, or social status, cyberbullying is often carried out with complete anonymity. This can make the cyberbully seem to have much more power over the target (Pettalia et al., 2013).
  Cyberbullies have no power over you; only what you give them!

- Snap Chat Training Video with References
- Snap Chat Supporting Video Handouts
- Snap Chat Reflection Questionnaire
- Snap Chat Reflection Questionnaire Answer Key

April App of the Month- Tumblr

The defined purpose for Tumblr is to allow its users blog, or write back and forth with one another, about various topics. Users can also follow blogs that are public or use a private blogging session with friends.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  Cassidy et al. (2009) determined that 95% of participants believed specific characteristics of an individual made them the principal target for cyberbullies. This included having a learning disability, being overweight, dressing or looking differently than the majority of peers, and even having artistic, academic, or athletic abilities that some may envy.
  Treat everyone the way you want to be treated.

- Tumblr Training Video with References
- Tumblr Supporting Video Handouts
- Tumblr Reflection Questionnaire
- Tumblr Reflection Questionnaire Answer Key

May App of the Month- Google+

The defined purpose for Google+ is to allow its users to set up multiple "social circles" around social networking interactions. This keeps the communications between work colleagues, friends, family, etc.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  Hinduja and Patchin (2011) indicated cyberbullying is all the more devastating as it plays out in continuous, often around the clock, torment for the victim.
  Parents, cyberbullying can enter your home without your awareness. Ask your children if they are experiencing cyberbullying.

- Google+ Training Video with References
- Google+ Supporting Video Handouts
- Google+ Reflection Questionnaire
- Google+ Reflection Questionnaire Answer Key

June App of the Month - Vine

The defined purpose for Vine is an app that allows its users the opportunity to create and post short, 6.5 second videos, that are displayed to the public of other Vine users.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  Although students who have been cyberbullied have first-hand experience with the emotional pain involved, they tend to become aggressors themselves rather than confide in supportive adults (Walrave & Heirman, 2011).
  Let others know about your pain.

- Vine Training Video with References
- Vine Supporting Video Handouts
- Vine Reflection Questionnaire
- Vine Reflection Questionnaire Answer Key

July App of the Month - WhatsApp

The defined purpose for WhatsApp is an app that is specific to Smartphone which allow the users to send videos, text messages, and audio messages to specific cellular phone numbers.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  Targets may begin to feel hopeless and often withdraw to a place of serious depression (Lazuras et al., 2013).
  If your child seems sad, ask him or her why.

- WhatsApp Training Video with References
- WhatsApp Supporting Video Handouts
- WhatsApp Reflection Questionnaire
- WhatsApp Reflection Questionnaire Answer Key

August App of the Month- Pheed

The defined purpose for Pheed is and app that allows its users the opportunity to perform the actions of nearly all of the other apps that have been highlighted this year. It supports audio, broadcasts, text, pictures, and video, and even allows live broadcasting.

- Cyberbullying Tip of the Month
  A cyberbully will often send the same harassing text messages, emails, or pictures to a target and then to large numbers of peers, who in turn share the information with additional contacts (Li, 2007).
  This makes the hurt turn to humiliation. Don't cyberbully.

- Pheed Training Video with References
- Pheed Supporting Video Handouts
- Pheed Reflection Questionnaire
- Pheed Reflection Questionnaire Answer Key

First Annual App of the Month Parent Survey

The App of the Month Curriculum modules are designed to provide parents and students with information to support safe usage of Online apps. The following survey data will be used to inform changed and modifications to the modules to ensure their relevance to parent's and student's needs.

What components of the App of the Month Curriculum modules to you find most useful?

☐ Video Clips, ☐ Instructions on setting up an account, ☐ Instructions on safety features, ☐ The opportunities for discussion or reflection time, ☐ Other (Please Describe)

_____
_____
_____
_____

What featured App modules were most helpful to you?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What would you like to see added to the App of the Month content?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What content, if any, do you feel is unnecessary?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What Apps would you like to see featured in next year's App of the Month Curriculum modules?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B: Bullying Reporting Forms

[redacted] BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

1. **Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report:**
   _____
   (Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

2. **Check whether you are the:** **Target of the behavior** ☐ **Reporter (not the target)**

3. **Check whether you are a:** ☐ **Student** ☐ **Staff member (specify role)** _____

   ☐ **Parent** ☐ **Administrator** ☐ **Other (specify)** _____

   Your contact information/telephone number:_____

4. **If student, state your School:** _____ **Grade:** _____

5. **If staff member, state your School or Work site:**
   _____

---

6. **Information about the Incident:**

   Name of Target (of behavior):
   _____

   Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior):
   _____

   Date(s) of Incident(s):
   _____

   Time When Incident(s) Occurred:
   _____

   Location of Incident(s) (be as specific as possible):
   _____

---

7. **Witnesses** (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

   Name: _____ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other _____

   Name: _____ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other _____

   Name: _____ ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Other _____

---

8. Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.

FOR ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY

9. Signature of Person Filing this Report:
_____ Date: _____
(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

10: Form Given to: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date Received: _____

[redacted]1 BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM: Page 2

II. INVESTIGATION

1. **Investigator:_____**
   Position:_____
2. **Interviews:**
   - ☐ **Interviewed aggressor** **Name: _____** **Date: _____**
   - ☐ **Interviewed target** **Name: _____** **Date: _____**
   - ☐ **Interviewed witnesses** **Name: _____** **Date: _____**
     Name: _____ **Date: _____**
3. **Any prior documented Incidents by the aggressor?** ☐ Yes ☐ No
   If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION ☐ Yes ☐ No

Summary of Investigation:

(Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation:

□ YES **□ NO**

□ Bullying **□ Incident documented as** _____

□ Retaliation **□ Discipline referral only**_____

2. Contacts:

□ Target's parent/guardian Date:_____ **□ Aggressor's parent/guardian Date:** _____

□ District Equity Coordinator (DEC) Date: _____ **□ Law Enforcement Date:** _____

3. Action Taken:

□ Loss of Privileges □ Detention □ STEP referral □ Suspension

□ Community Service □ Education □ Other _____

4. Describe Safety Planning:

_____

Follow up with Target: scheduled for _____ **Initial and date when completed:** _____

Follow up with Aggressor: scheduled for _____ **Initial and date when completed:** _____

Report forwarded to Principal: Date_____ **Report forwarded to Superintendent: Date**_____

(If Principal was not the investigator)

Signature and Title: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C: Parent Survey

Elementary School Cyber Technology Parent Survey

1. What is the grade level of your child?
   ☐ K ☐ 1st ☐ 2nd ☐ 3rd ☐ 4th ☐ 5th ☐ 6th

2. What is the sex of your child?
   ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Do you have a computer with access to the Internet in your home?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Does your child have a computer with access to the Internet in his or her bedroom?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Where would you say your child has the most access to a computer with Internet?
   ☐ At home ☐ At school ☐ A Smart Phone ☐ I don't know
   ☐ Other – Please Specify _____

6. How often does your child use the Internet?
   ☐ Only at school ☐ At least once a day ☐ At least once a week ☐ I don't know

7. How often does your child text?
   ☐ Multiple times daily ☐ At least once a day ☐ At least once a week ☐ I don't know

8. Do you set time limits on your child's Internet usage?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ My child does not have Internet access

9. If your child uses a Smartphone or computer to access the Internet, how closely do you monitor your child's online activities?
   ☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Almost all the time ☐ Always ☐ No Internet access

10. What activities does your child most often engage in when on the Internet?
    ☐ School Work ☐ Social Media ☐ E-mail ☐ Gaming ☐ Downloading & listening to music
    ☐ Watching Videos ☐ Children's Websites ☐ I don't know ☐ No Internet access
    ☐ Other – Please Specify _____

11. Does your child have a Facebook Account?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know ☐ No Internet access

12. Does your child have a Twitter Account?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know ☐ No Internet access

13. Does your child have an IM (Instant Messaging) Account?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know ☐ No Internet access

14. Does your child have an Instagram Account?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I don't know ☐ No Internet access

15. I understand what is meant by the term "cyberbullying."
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Undecided ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

16. To my knowledge my child has been the victim of cyberbullying.
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Undecided ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

17. To my knowledge my child has cyberbullied someone else.
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Undecided ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

18. I am aware of safety strategies on the computer such as "parent controls" and "website history viewing."
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Undecided ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

19. I am interested in having my child participate in a training program for on Internet safety (Information security, Internet rules, Cyberbullying)?
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Undecided ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

20. I am interested in participating in a training program for Parents on Internet safety (Information security, Internet rules, Cyberbullying)?
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Undecided ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

Other information I would like to know or experiences I would like to share are:
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for completing this survey!

Appendix D: Written Permission for Survey Use and Adaptation

From: Na'Lisa Rowe
Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2014 2:22 PM
To: Hosterman, Kathleen
Subject: Re: Leave RE: Parent Knowledge Survey

Great, I would love to see the results! Good luck!

Na'Lisa Hussar
High School Counselor

RE: Parent Knowledge Survey
Hosterman, Kathleen
Sent: Wednesday, June 18, 2014 9:56 AM
To: Na'Lisa Rowe

I am thrilled to finally speak with you. I have hunted for you for over a month. Yeah! I actually found your thesis as part of my lit review. My original dissertation was going to include teacher and parent perceptions and my second recommended I forego teacher perceptions and go with actual parent knowledge. By hunting for that type of information and with the guidance of my chair using the Walden University research data base your study popped up. The survey is really perfectly aligned with the kind of information I want to ask my local parents here in South Central Massachusetts.

Kathleen Hosterman
Principal

From: Na'Lisa Rowe
Sent: Tuesday, June 17, 2014 4:35 PM
To: Hosterman, Kathleen
Subject: Re: Parent Knowledge Survey

Hi Kathleen,

Sure, but I agree you would certainly need to update it based upon the changes in social networking. Can I ask where you saw my survey?

Thanks- Na'Lisa

Na'Lisa Hussar
High School Counselor

On Tue, Jun 17, 2014 at 2:14 PM, Hosterman, Kathleen wrote:
Hello Na'Lisa,

I am in my doctoral program and am concentrating on cyberbullying for my dissertation. I am interested in using the parent knowledge survey you created for you Master's Thesis. Is this something you would consider? I would also like to do some limited modifications based on My Space no longer being a major attraction for teens and Twitter becoming so popular.

I appreciate your willingness to consider this request and I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you so much,

Kathleen Hosterman

Appendix E: Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

Topic I

Since the implementation of an approved Bullying Plan with the MA DESE in 2010, what trends have you noticed with ICT (internet Communications Technology) accessibility and what are the protocols for ICT devices while on school grounds? Have these protocols changed over the past five years and do you see them changing again in the next five years?

Topic II

How do you perceive that cyberbullying is impacting in-school peer relationships? Are you aware of cyberbullying activity that involves your students? Has this activity only taken place off of school grounds? Have you been involved in any discipline involving cyberbullying due to direct impact of the educational process of your building?

Topic III

Specifically in relation to cyberbullying, how effective do you feel the current bullying policy is? Do you feel that the policy should be amended or left as is? Why or Why not?

Topic IV

What do you perceive are the concerns of your teaching staff regarding cyberbullying? What do you perceive are the concerns of your parents regarding cyberbullying?

Topic V

Is the Michigan Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention satisfactory in addressing the issue of cyberbullying? What additional information or strategies should be included in a social curriculum which targets cyberbullying? In what ways might parents benefit from training about cyber safety and social media sites?

Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name of Signer: Study Scribe

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: Parent Knowledge and Principals' Perceptions of Cyberbullying in 21st century Rural Elementary Schools I will have access to information which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: **Date:**

Appendix G: Letter of Cooperation

Letter of Cooperation from [redacted]

Superintendent of Schools, [redacted]

[redacted]

September 15, 2014

Dear Kathleen Hosterman,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Parent Knowledge and Principal Perceptions of Cyberbullying in 21st Century Rural Elementary Schools. As part of this study, I authorize you to conduct a focus group session with the [redacted] elementary principals and a parent survey utilizing Survey Monkey for [redacted] elementary [redacted]. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: the technology support of allowing Survey Monkey to be used and a survey link being embedded on the central office website as well as th[redacted]ol website, and the use of [redacted] conference room for the principal focus group session. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

[redacted]
Superintendent of Schools