

Literature Review

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“There is no greater disability in society, than the inability to see a person as more. - Robert M. Hensel” (Inspirational Motivational Quotes, 2018). From a young age, many children conform to the idea that differences in individuals are oddities. They use those differences to single out other children, make them feel less than and as they grow up to bully others. It is essential to create a program to not only bring awareness to students in the primary school level, but to establish an environment of inclusion. Integration is key when establishing preventative measures for bullying in secondary school. Throughout this literature review, I will expand on trainings, workshops, and activities used to help support the program, and bring awareness using professional resources and information.

This program relies on the parents, teachers, and administrator’s awareness of disabilities. According to *Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers*, one of the first individuals a child meets in the school environment is their teacher. The teacher will most likely be the one to identify any signs of a learning disability through observation. Teachers can identify the issues, but many ignore the warning signs and chalk it up to the child’s attitude or personality. It is essential as a part of the program that there are workshops as well as training programs where the parents, teachers, and administrators of the elementary school can discuss awareness, learning about the challenges children with specific disabilities face and how to create a more positive and inclusive learning environment (Seema, 2015, p.83). When teachers learn to identify learning struggles, their students are facing early on or have been notified that a student has a disability, they can discuss early intervention options with the school, counselors, other teachers, and the child’s parents (Seema, 2015, p.82).

As early as elementary school we see children engaging in bullying. According to *Bullying in Elementary School: An American Perspective*, researchers have conducted a study

using about 484 students in the fifth grade. These students were divided throughout 35 different classrooms in the United States. Next, they were then divided into three categories. First are students with disabilities which includes learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, emotional disorders, as well as behavioral disorders (8.5%). Second is general education students (76.2%) and lastly were gifted students at (8.5%). All these students were in inclusion or general education classroom for most of their day (Conn, 2012, p.9). “Students with high incidence disabilities generally display social skill deficits and are likely to have significant social interaction problems that lead to low social status, prompting researchers to hypothesize that such students would be more likely to develop social roles that support aggression or that, on the other hand, make them targets of peer aggression” (Conn, 2012, p.9). The study results also concluded that students with disabilities were the students that were bullied most based on the negative mindset of their peers. The program created will give an opportunity to students without disabilities to empathize with their peers and build a positive attitude towards them. According to *Early Exposure to People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities and Later Attitudes toward Social Interactions and Inclusion* “each child with a disability should be placed in the most inclusive educational environment that can provide the child with a satisfactory and meaningful educational experience. Theoretically, placement in the least restrictive environment promotes integration of and interaction among students with and without disabilities and provides students with disabilities a greater breadth of academic and social opportunities” (Lund, & Seekins, 2013, p. 2).

Taking some of the same measures in our program as the article *Social-Emotional Learning Program to Promote Prosocial and Academic Skills among Middle School Students with Disabilities* uses can be very beneficial. This includes “students completing self-report

measures of school belonging, empathy, caring, and willingness to intervene in bullying situations; students with disabilities in the intervention schools reported a statistical and clinically significant increase in willingness to intervene in bullying incidents in comparison with students with disabilities in control schools and an increase of half a grade on their report cards in comparison with the control sample”(Rose, Simpson, & Ellis, 2015). Taking these measures will help with the social learning process as well as with the emotional learning process for students who have disabilities.

In any support program for students with disabilities, it is essential to have a general understanding of basic special educational terminology and systems. According to *Understanding IEPs* An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a legal document which is also used as a plan to help students with special needs/disabilities to have the right supports, instructions, modifications, and accommodations in public schools once a child is age 3. Students in private school settings can get a similar service called an Individual Services Plan. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is also known as IDEA and covers IEPs. While according to *The Difference Between IEPs and 504 Plans* IDEA is a law in place to provide free appropriate public education (FAPE) needs to students who are eligible and have disabilities. According to *Understood.org* students who are eligible are those who have autism, blindness, deafness, emotional disturbances, hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairments, ADHD, language impairments, traumatic brain injury, speech impairments, visual impairments and learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyscalculia or dysgraphia. A 504 plan is a list of services the school can provide for example extended test time, a behavioral aid or note-taking aid. According to *How School Culture and Support Systems Can Improve Disciplinary Outcomes for Students with Disabilities* be discussing IEPs, Section

504, IDEA and Inclusion among other terminology can easily be integrated into the workshops and trainings held at the elementary school. “School leaders model the positive behavior system for teachers, just as teachers do for their students. They demonstrate trust in us, value us as a professional community, and offer a lot of support, all of which reinforces the school culture we are all trying to build” (Morando, & Lancet, 2018, p 5).

According to *Practices That Address Bullying of Students with Disabilities* many students who have disabilities tend to have issues with perception, attention, speech, memory, social skills, as well as difficulties academically. These challenges affect children in and outside of the school environment. A practice incorporated into our program from *Practices That Address Bullying of Students with Disabilities* using a questionnaire or survey to see how the students feel about bullying to implement necessary changes. This survey would serve as a tool to measure how those children think about bullying in their school, where harassment may occur and how often it occurs (McNamara, 2016, p. 31). It is a simple idea, but as this survey would need to be filled out by young students in the elementary grade level and by students who may struggle with reading, writing or comprehension, it can become a difficult task.

It is essential to try to make the necessary accommodations in the questionnaire for most students. For example, if a student needs an interpreter, needs time modification, needs help to see or comprehending the material or the concept of bullying (McNamara, 2016, p.33). Ways to accommodate the survey to the students’ needs can include using an appropriate developmental level video, avoiding distractions, using movement in the classroom, checking for comprehension frequently, pairing students with other students who attain good attending skills and working in pairs or small groups to keep them engaged (McNamara, 2016, p. 35). Preventing bullying takes a lot of effort and if done correctly can make a tremendous positive impact on the

school environment. “At every school, leaders need to recognize that students with disabilities have a high probability of being victims of bullying. School leaders need a systematic approach to modify the school-wide anti-bullying program so that it is accessible to students with special needs. That is the only way that ALL students can attend school in a safe, kind and caring environment that is conducive to learning” (McNamara, 2016, p. 35). When promoting a positive learning environment, it is also important that it is safe and supportive. According to *Implementing Legal Strategies for Creating Safe and Supportive School Environments* “The term “safe and supportive schools” shall mean schools that foster a safe, positive, healthy and inclusive whole school learning environment that enables students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and nonacademic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being. It integrates services and aligns initiatives that promote students’ behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children’s mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives” (Cole, 2013).

Another addition to the program will include addressing bullying as well as disabilities through cartoon lessons. At the elementary age level, many children enjoy and watch cartoons. Using those familiar faces throughout our program to encourage positivity, while building self-esteem and empathy despite their differences can help children better understand bullying and disabilities at their level. Bullying is a social interaction of students. Using the cartoons to define disability, define bullies and what they do, followed by ways to stop and prevent bullying (Rule, Logan, & Kohler, 2012, p. 89). The cartoons will be informational, use problem-solving skills,

symbolism, and humor all to grasp the attention of the students. Then the students will complete a quick questionnaire or activity with the help of a group or peer (Rule, Logan, & Kohler, 2012, p. 90). This way we can measure what they interpreted and connected with throughout the help of the cartoons. As a class the students will engage in a casual discussion of what they understood cognitively or emotionally and if they struggled to follow so that the teacher may clarify. The article *Preparing Preservice Teachers to Address Bullying through Cartoon Lessons* recommends that the cartoon lessons should only be for special education students who have mild disabilities and for students who do not have disabilities. As students with severe disabilities were not very responsive to the cartoon lesson throughout their study (Rule, Logan, & Kohler, 2012, p. 104). The program can also help address the disability bullying issues by teaching students the different forms of bullying and recognizing the effects, teaching conflict resolution strategies, how to respond to bullying and providing positive role models and promoting a positive learning environment (McCarra & Forrester, 2013).

In the school system, many children are typically developing, but not all children are. Some children have disabilities and others are gifted. Students with disabilities may also be known as twice-exceptional. Children with twice exceptionality are those children who are both gifted and have a disability (Josephson, Wolfgang, & Mehrenberg, 2018, p.1). According to *Strategies for Supporting Students Who Are Twice-Exceptional* twice exceptionality has been covered by IDEA since 2004 including the student's strengths, student's needs, supports emotional needs, provides counseling supports, learning supports, gifted supports, disability meetings and provides challenging and remediation activities (Josephson, Wolfgang, & Mehrenberg, 2018, p.3)

According to *"When We Talk about Compliance, It's Because We Lived It": Online Educators' Roles in Supporting Students with Disabilities* personalized and catered to their child's needs. Online school is also online with the disabilities' law, but studies show, it makes the process more impersonal (Rice, & Carter, 2015, p.16). Some children who cannot be in an academic environment due to the severity of their disability is understandable. Though it can be beneficial for students, who have limitations which are not as severe to attend school. It's important for children to be in a learning environment where they are positively and academically challenged by their peers, a place where they can have new experiences and go on field trips. Some children may have disabilities, disorder, or impairments but being around other children who are having similar experiences can make them feel more relatable. Even if there are children who they can't relate to, they can still learn to express themselves in a positive environment around peers their age. The program will be held once a month in a school setting, but if a child is using an online platform, they can interact through our cartoon lessons and other activities. This program will be accessible online for those who would like to use it and for parents to review with their child at home but created in the mindset that it will coincide with the instruction of the teachers and counselors.

In conclusion, this program does not only bring awareness to students in the primary school level but to establish an environment of inclusion to integrate preventative measures for bullying in secondary school. This literature review expanded on trainings, workshops, and activities used to help support the program, and bring awareness using professional resources and information. The program will bring awareness from 3rd to 5th grade by addressing a different disability monthly while implementing appropriate grade level reading content and creative activities such as the cartoon lessons described above. It will also discuss promoting the



integration of students, inclusion, bringing awareness to common day problems and using preventative measures for bullying in secondary school. This program is essential as there are programs that are similar, but no program currently teaches students about disabilities in the elementary school system. A program like this can bring students and the school closer together by making it a more accountable environment.

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