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## An Examination Of Best Practices For Teachers To Promote Empathy And Decrease Bullying Based On Ethnicity

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An EXAMINATION of BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHERS to PROMOTE EMPATHY and  
DECREASE BULLYING BASED ON ETHNICITY

By

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English as a Second Language

Hamline University

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

America being known as the great “Melting Pot” is a myth that has been perpetuated through popular culture for decades. In fact, America has a long history of hostility towards immigrants (Woolf, 2015). The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Immigration Act of 1891, the Johnson/Reed Act, and the Arizona SB 1070 are all examples of government sanction bias towards immigrant communities. Today, yet another piece of legislation has been presented to discriminate against immigrants. The RAISE Act, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act, has been proposed. This bill reduces legal immigration and creates criteria for immigrants to come to the U.S. According to this act immigrants would only be candidates for admission to the United States if they were able to easily assimilate, have the means to economically support themselves, and currently speak English.

According to *Teaching Tolerance*, a Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center (2017), ethnic students have reported a rise in racial harassment since the 2016 election. The political climate and bias against people of color has expanded into our schools and classrooms (Teaching Tolerance, 2017). It is widely accepted that bullying is a long-standing problem in schools, and the current atmosphere towards immigrants has multiplied the incidents of bullying victimization (Turner, 2017). The current environment of anti-immigrant rhetoric is my motivation for investigating bullying and English language learners. In this research, I will focus on the following question: How can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community where all students feel safe and respected in our culturally diverse classrooms?

## **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IMPORTANCE**

Since early May 2018, 342 children have been separated from their parents after crossing the Southern U.S. border, according to the Department of Homeland Security, as part of a new immigration strategy (NPR.org, 2018). I, like many people, am outraged by the separation of children from their families. My interest in culture, social justice and the human rights of all people has lead me to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies, and obtain minors in cultural anthropology, human relations, and women's studies. I am researching bullying of English language learners through the lens of a general education elementary school teacher with additional insight as mentioned above.

I started my teaching career 22 years ago in a small elementary school in the Mojave Desert. I taught in an English Language Development classroom (ELD). An ELD classroom and instruction is designed to promote the effective and efficient acquisition of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of the Ell student. Nearly half of the students in my second grade ELD classroom spoke a language other than English as their first language. These students were predominantly Spanish speakers from Mexico and Central America. I also had German and Afrikaans speakers in my elementary classroom. My elementary teaching degree from a university in Central Minnesota did not prepare me to effectively teach the EL students in my classroom, many of whom had recently arrived in the United States. These students did not speak any English and I did not speak any Spanish. Based on this humbling experience, it was my objective to be an effective general education teacher for all students. During my tenure in California I was required to take courses to earn a Cross-cultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) Certificate to learn best practices as an ELD classroom teacher. After

teaching four years in California, I returned to Minnesota and continued my training in teaching English language learners and began my journey at Hamline taking ESL licensure classes to become a competent teacher of ELs. I was the first teacher in my building to request and be allowed to have English language learners explicitly clustered in my classroom, in order to co-teach with the ESL teacher and provide effective support for the EL students. During my 16 years at my elementary building, I have seen the cultural diversity of the student population triple from my early days at my suburban metro district in the upper midwest school. The student population my first years at this suburban Metro district in the upper midwest consisted of caucasian, English speakers. Fast forward five years and my classroom had seven different languages spoken and seven cultures represented. Today, my elementary building has 742 students. 40% of the enrolled students are students of color and 100 of these students qualify for English language services (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018).

The cultural population increase may be due to diverse populations moving from the Twin Cities Metro area, families networking and encouraging others to move to the area, the availability of low income housing in a economy where owning a home is difficult, and immigration from war-torn countries. At last count 15 languages are spoken in this elementary building. This dynamic change has been an eye opening experience for my fellow educators and me. In today's political atmosphere of intolerance, I am fearful for all students, especially English language learners and immigrants. The anxiety that this hostility is producing has affected our kids in unacceptable ways. Students have grown suddenly consumed and preoccupied about their immigration status, the color of their skin and country of origin. This has without a doubt affected their ability to attend to their learning. Many students were frightened to

attend school the day after the election because of fear of hostility due to ethnicity and citizenship status. Throughout this project I have focused predominantly on my concern of bullying of EL students in today's political climate. I have additional concern for my own children, ages 8 and 13, who are Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota this concern is not the result of the election but having a greater sense and of the intolerance and violence that the Native community has been subjected to historically. My daughter, at six, said, "She didn't want to be Native anymore" after hearing about the atrocities that were perpetrated against Natives, her ancestors, in the Dakota War of 1862. I would like all children to be proud of their heritage. Children should live in a world where they can feel safe and valued for their differences. This I know, is what my kids' 8th great-grandfather, Chief Big Thunder would have wanted.

My cultural experience was limited as an elementary student attending school in Roseville, Minnesota. In 1979, a local Lutheran church sponsored political refugees from Vietnam. The immigrants relocated to Minnesota. Because of this sponsorship, my third grade class received a new student. Having this experience as a nine year old was a value-add and a rich experience for all of the students in our class. Our class had the opportunity to learn about another's culture, help students learn to speak English, and develop empathy for a family that was forced out of their home country. This encounter has stayed with me, and I feel it was an invaluable learning experience that all students should have. Today, students have the same opportunity to learn about immigrants' culture in their own elementary classroom. It is important to put systems in place to ensure all students are shown respect and receiving a high quality education.



As an elementary teacher all bullying concerns me. I am especially cognizant of the disproportionality of bullying EL students may encounter based upon their cultural background, ethnic heritage, and/or immigration status. A diverse classroom is invaluable for students (Stuart Wells, Fox, & Cordova-Cobo, 2016). It is my opinion that all students deserve to learn in a safe, supportive, positive, accepting classroom. I'm committed to anti-bullying and was honored one of the first three educators to receive a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Certificate from Hamline University. In my role as an elementary educator, I've used this certificate in my classroom to educate and support students and have created trainings and resource manuals for other educators.

### **Rationale**

I am examining the connection between bullying and EL students, to find out *how can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community where all students feel safe and respected in our culturally diverse classrooms?*

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this capstone I will examine the current research on bullying to gain a better understanding of bullying based on ethnicity, culture, and/or immigration status. Research on bullying is abundant, yet there is much insight that can be gained through further research on bullying based on ethnicity and culture. Researchers are aware of the complex nature of bullying. They have been studying the dynamics and identifying risk factors while simultaneously determining appropriate prevention and intervention programming for forty years (Espelage and Swearer, 2003a). Research based recommendations to support victimized EL students still need to be researched further. There is a disparity between research on general bullying and on

bullying based on ethnicity, culture and/or immigration status (Jansen et al., 2016). More data needs to be compiled to gain a more complete picture as to how EL students are being victimized.

### **Preview of Chapter Two**

In this paper, I set out to review the following ideas: I investigated bullying based on culture, ethnicity and/or immigration status; and to determine the impact on our immigrant and EL students. I found out how a classroom teacher can create a classroom community and environment where all students feel safe and respected. Finally, I developed lessons to implement into my district's current social and emotional learning curriculum and bullying prevention program. These lessons will be provided for teachers and staff to implement in order to support all students.

In Chapter Two, I review the literature relevant to bullying based on ethnicity and culture. I also review the Second Step Social Emotional Learning and Bullying Prevention curricula, and discuss actions that can be taken in schools to foster tolerance and prevent bullying behavior. Chapter Three includes a discussion of my project for developing a list of best practices for teaching practitioners and lessons on bullying prevention. It is my hope that this combination of supports can help foster a community and classroom environment where all students feel safe and respected.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

Substantial research has been dedicated to bullying, I would argue that further research should include a focus on bullying based on culture, ethnicity and/or immigration. There is a long painful history with race in this country explored extensively in Jon Meacham's latest historical assessment, *The Soul of America: The Battle for our Better Angels* (Meacham, 2018). In their research Bajaj, Ghaffar-Kucher, and Desai (2016) share a 1907 newspaper article with headlines showing a mob attack on East Asian immigrants. Meacham's text bridges this painful history with our current reality. The current political climate leads to questions and concerns about the victimization rate of students based upon culture, ethnicity, and/or immigration status. This chapter will explore how these three ideas impact or contribute to the rate at which students are targeted. I will examine the *Second Step* SEL (social-emotional learning) and bullying prevention and intervention programs.

Through the lens of a general education classroom teacher, it is my hope to identify best practices for teaching practitioners to utilize in their classroom to create a welcoming, safe, tolerant classroom and school wide environment for all students. Thus, answering my central question how can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community where all students feel safe and respected in our culturally diverse classrooms?

## **Bullying in the U.S.**

The customary definition of bullying is *any unwanted aggressive behavior by another student or group of students that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or highly likely to be repeated* (Blad, 2014). The precise moment of the first bullying act is not known, but accounts of bullying are in literature from as early as the 19th century (Hymel & Swearer, 2009). Bullying is an age old problem that was touted as a harmless rite of passage previously, but more recently there has been a heightened awareness of bullying in schools due to the connection of school gun violence perpetrated by victims of bullying (Cornell, 2014). Cornell (2014) suggests this carefully because they know that not all victims of bullying react to their victimization through violence. Bullying is a complex issue that affects many students, parents, teachers, and administrators and can have life long mental health effects for victims.

Dan Olweus, a renowned Norwegian researcher has been studying bullying since the 1970s. He discusses worldwide about the prevalence, long-term effects and techniques to prevent bullying. In data collected in 2007 researchers found that an average of 14 percent of students reported being bullied and 5 percent of students reported bullying others (Luxenberg, Limber, & Olweus, 2015, pp. 12-14) Bullying rates spiked in third grade, with 22% of students reporting being bullied 2-3 times a month, 15% of eighth graders reported being bullied 2-3 times a month. By twelfth grade 7% of students reported being bullied. The most common types of bullying reported were verbal bullying at 16% for girls and 15% for boys, rumor spreading 15% for girls and 11% for boys, and bullying by exclusion 14% for girls and 11% for boys (Luxenberg, Limber, & Olweus, 2015, pp. 12-14.).

Minnesota legislators have acknowledged the complex problem of bullying in schools, and in 2014, Minnesota passed the Safe and Supportive Schools Act (Minnesota School Student Bullying Policy, 2014). The Safe and Supportive Schools Act provides school districts with guidance and support to adopt policies. Districts are given a template of bullying prevention and intervention programming, and in order to be in compliance with the law, districts must adopt a policy and procedures to support victims of bullying (Larson, 2014). It is the district stakeholders that are tasked with creating and ensuring buy-in from teachers and staff members in schools. My suburban metro district in the upper Midwest has adopted a policy that includes reporting procedures, district action, and training and education for staff and students. This district has also implemented the Second Step (SEL) curriculum, the Second Step Bullying Prevention curriculum, and the Peaceful Bus Initiative to increase a positive school environment in order to prevent bullying.

**Bullying of EL/immigrant students.** Experts have stated that it is not clear yet how students are targeted based upon their ethnicity, but the research is still growing (stopbullying.gov, 2017). Bullying is a complex social problem. It is imperative that all school staff members are vigilant in watching for and responding to bullying behaviors in schools (Committee for Children, 2013). Especially since research shows that EL students may have a higher rate of bullying victimization. There are many reasons an EL student may be a victim of bullying. Bullying victims are often seen as different, which EL students can seem when in the cultural, ethnic or racial minority, which Jansen et al., noted in a 2013 study. In addition, immigrants are perceived negatively in some political circles. Politics can exploit fear and difference to promote policies that are not supportive of immigrant communities. In Sanchez and Cerezo's (2010) research in

Spain, they found being an immigrant to be a risk factor that needed to be taken into account in bullying situations. Imbalance of power was also found to be a risk factor, in some cases (Olweus, 1991). EL students may be in a higher risk group for bullying due to their visible cultural garments (Goldweber, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2012, p. 208). All of these may be determining factors of victimization, yet there is much research to still be done to find the association between bullying and EL students.

Data collected on the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire found that 27% of third through fifth grade girls reported being bullied based upon their race, 23% of sixth through eighth grade girls; and 23% ninth through twelfth grade girls. Boys reported a higher incident of victimization: 29% of third through fifth grade, 31% of sixth through eighth grade, and 40% of ninth through twelfth grade (Olweus, 2014). Victimization is linked to many social and emotional effects. Students who are victimized perform lower academically, and can lead to depression and anxiety (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Much more research needs to occur for all of the stakeholders to completely understand the complexity of bullying of ethnic groups, EL/immigrant students (Peguero, Popp, & Koo, 2015).

It is imperative that all students are treated with acceptance, dignity and respect. It is a teacher's responsibility to model and teach tolerance and respect in the classroom, and an administrator's responsibility to ensure that teachers are effectively teaching the SEL curriculum, bullying prevention curriculum and modeling positive relationships.

### **What We Know about Bullying and EL/Immigrant Students**

As I previously stated, experts are unsure how students are bullied based upon their culture or ethnicity (stopbullying.gov). Although there is much current research that examines

the relationship between ethnicity/immigration/culture and bullying, much more needs to be completed to fully understand the complex dynamics of bullying and EL students.

A number of researchers have found that ethnic minorities/immigrants are at a higher risk for bullying (Swearer & Hymel, 2015; Fisher et al., 2014; Mendez et al., 2012). Mendez, Bauman, and Guillor (2012). These scholars found that non-native English speakers were more likely to report bullying victimization than their English speaking peers (p. 287). There are layers of risk factors for victims of bullying based upon ethnicity and culture. In a conclusive finding Menez et al. (2012) suggests that Mexican Americans feel superior to their first generation immigrant peers. Mexican Americans reported feeling a cultural disconnect to their Mexican heritage. This study suggests that this leads to isolation in the classroom only compounded by the language barrier between the two groups.

Further research was completed by Walsh, Clercq, Molcho, Harel-Fisch, Davison, Rich Madsen, and Stevens (2016). They studied the relationship between immigrant school composition and bullying (p. 2). Their research examine the findings from eleven countries. The findings suggest that a relationship was found between immigrant school composition, bullying perpetration, and high levels of violence. A number of researchers have found that high levels of immigrant school composition can lead to competition, conflict and violence (Jansen et al., 2006; Vervoort et al., 2010). Similarly, in a Dutch study scholars found that first graders of diverse ethnic backgrounds have a higher risk of bullying involvement than their Dutch peers (Jansen et al., 2006). In more recent research, it is content that there is a direct link between the political climate and xenophobic bullying of South Asian American students (Bajaj et al., 2016). Bajaj et al. (2016) examine xenophobic bullying of South Asian American students post 9/11 to examine

how forces of racism and xenophobia come together to shape lives of students in schools ( p. 482). This research argues that Islamophobia is being perpetuated through politics, media, poorly developed curriculum, and poor teacher training this leads to bias among peers, teachers, and creating hostile school environments. Bajaj et al. created a curriculum to “expand the empathic frame of who is American, human and worthy of dignity” (Bajaj et al. (2016), p. 482).

Based upon the findings of these scholars, it is evident that school districts should provide specific bullying prevention and intervention units based on cultural and ethnic bullying (Bajaj et al., 2016). Our world is becoming more diverse and educators must be committed to transforming the climate of aggression in the classroom to one of tolerance and respect. A positive step for schools to prohibit bullying behaviors and ensure a positive school environment is by implementing a social emotional learning curriculum and bullying prevention and intervention programs (Farmer, 2000). Stakeholders must see the value in implementing these valuable programs and comprehensive training for teachers and school staff. The social emotional learning can provide students with the social competencies they need to function successfully in society (Committee for Children, 2013).

### **An Examination of the Second Step SEL and Bullying Prevention Curricula**

Current research has found that implementing effective bullying prevention and intervention programs can reduce bullying in schools by 20 to 23 percent (Ttofi & Farrington, 2012). I am briefly examining The Committee for Children’s Second Step SEL program, which is implemented school wide in my suburban metro district in the upper midwest. Researchers have found that bullying intervention and prevention effectiveness has the most success when there is school wide implementation of the program (Brown et al., 2011). The *Second Step*



program is a social-emotional learning program that involves “the systematic development of a core set of social and emotional skills that help children more effectively handle life challenges and thrive in both their learning and social environments” (Ragozzino & Utne O’Brien, 2009). The *Second Step* program has four main components to teach social competencies. The program touches on empathy, emotional management, emotional management skills, and friendship skills. Friendships skills are essential and can prevent bullying by providing friendship connections (Committee for Children, 2013). In addition, social problem solving and assertiveness training can help provide students with resources they need to communicate effectively.

The *Second Step* Bullying Prevention Program (2011) bridges the *Second Step* SEL curriculum. The program covers components that address classroom climate, educating students and staff about bullying, and teaching to recognize, report, and refuse bullying. The program teaches staff-members ways to appropriately respond to reports of bullying. The *Second Step* bullying prevention program has a strong focus on the bystanders of bullying behaviors. Bystanders have the power to support the bullying or support the victim of bullying. The *Second Step* program includes teacher training, which has been found to increase the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs (Hahn Fox et al., 2012). One critical piece that is missing, as Bajaj et al., (2016) mention in their research, is specific lessons tailored to educate students about bullying based on culture, ethnicity, xenophobia, and/or immigration status (p. 482). Utilizing the *Second Step* (SEL) and bullying prevention curriculums school wide are shown to increase social competencies and decrease bullying. Especially with buy-in from teachers, who then can effectively teach the curriculums and respond to bullying behaviors.

### **Recommendations for Fostering a Safe School Environment for all Students**

Establishing a positive school environment that is safe, inclusive, and tolerant is mandatory for all stakeholders in education (Committee for Children, 2013). Teachers and support staff are an integral part of promoting a positive school environment and eradicating bullying (Committee for Children, 2013) and have been “identified as key agents of change in bullying prevention” (2013). Stakeholders must have an understanding of the impact of the increasing number of immigrant students in schools and the relationship to bullying behavior. Schools, teachers, staff and peers play a critical role in the integration of immigrant students (Walsh et al., 2016). Findings show that more staff and school support reduces bullying behavior (Larochette, Murphy, & Craig, 2010). Similarly, Hahn Fox, Farrington, and Ttofi (2012) found teachers and staff to be critical in bullying prevention. They noted that good playground supervision, firm discipline, clear rules, good classroom management, school wide meetings, information for parents, and school wide bullying policy and training for teacher and parents are important pieces in preventing bullying (pp. 279-281).

The use of “culturally responsive” classroom management strategies have been shown to foster a safe, tolerant classroom (Metropolitan Center for Urban Education: Steinhardt School of Culture, 2008). The components of culturally responsive classroom management include many pieces. Including, teachers reflecting upon their own cultural lenses and biases and having knowledge of students’ cultural background. Also, stakeholders must have an awareness of broader social, economic and political context (Metropolitan Center for Urban Education: Steinhardt School of Culture, 2008).

Additionally, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (2014), make these suggestions to create a safe and supportive classroom

- Display rules regarding bullying
- Teachers and staff should be role models of positive social behavior
- Immediate action to investigate bullying incidents
- Listen carefully to parents and students when discussing bullying
- Notify parents of bullying situations
- Protect victimized student with a safety plan
- Hold classroom meetings to discuss relationships and build a classroom community
- Provide information regarding bullying to parents (Hazelden Foundation, 2016)

### **Research Question**

I am investigating bullying and ESL students to determine *how can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community where all students feel safe and respected in our culturally diverse classrooms?*

### **Conclusion**

Chapter Two explored the current research on bullying based on culture, ethnicity, and/or immigration status. That will aid in answering the research question *how can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community where all students feel safe and respected in our culturally diverse classrooms?* I also delved into the *Second Steps* SEL and bullying prevention program and examined a combination of supports for teachers and staff to foster a safe and tolerant classroom and school.

It is clear that there is a problem in US schools regarding bullying victimization. There are many questions that remain regarding the connection between ethnicity, culture, and/or

immigration status and bullying. Researchers have examined many ways to support bullied students and have created recommendations to support students in the classroom. In response to the research presented I created lessons on bullying based on ethnicity, culture, and/or immigration status that will seamlessly integrate into my current bullying prevention curriculum. I produced effective lessons that can be easily taught by educators. Based on my review, I discuss my idea for lessons to integrate into the current program.

### **Preview of Chapter Three**

In Chapter Three, I will discuss the tradebook based lesson plans I created to promote a safe and friendly classroom environment for all learners. As part of the project description, I will provide detailed information on the use of the Responsive Classroom *Engaging Academic Planning Guide*. The lessons created will provide resources for grade three teachers in my suburban Metro district in the upper Midwest.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Project description

#### Introduction

Creating a safe, friendly classroom environment for all learners should be on the forefront for all stakeholders concerned about current trends. Bullying has been a leading social issue plaguing schools for decades. While the research on stereotypical bullying is plentiful, it is my goal specifically to address bullying based on culture, ethnicity, and/or immigration status. This chapter will illuminate how the current atmosphere of hostility towards immigrants may transfer into schools and classroom settings. I will make possible recommendations for positive, inclusive classroom environments to be utilized by teachers, staff and administrators in elementary school buildings.

My aim is to provide bullying prevention lessons to address the question: *How can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community and environment where all students can feel safe and respected in our ever expanding, culturally diverse classrooms?*

#### **SEL Programs Second Step and Second Step Bullying Prevention Program**

While there is no “one size fits all” program to reduce bullying (Swearer & Hymel, 2015), I am utilizing the *Second Step* SEL model bullying prevention program currently mandated in my district. This social-ecological model provides support on many levels. Family, community, peer norms, classroom climate, and societal factors are all taken into account in the program’s framework. Research has shown its effectiveness and hopefully, teacher buy-in will be heightened since they are familiar with the *Second Step* program. I aim to continue the discussion of bullying by focusing on ethnicity, culture, immigration, and empathy. The lessons

created include: Children Around the World; Culture, Immigration, Immigrants' Contribution to the World; and Empathy.

My hope is that administrators and teachers will recognize the value in teaching the lessons and commit their time to effectively implement these additional lessons. I aim to use the most current research on bullying based on culture, ethnicity, and/or immigration status, to guide my lessons. Much more data on bullying is on the forefront and I will use current research to promote best practices.

### **Design Framework**

This project is composed of lesson plans to enhance the *Second Step* SEL program currently used in my school district and further educate students on the topics of basic needs of all children, culture, immigration, immigrants' contributions to the world and empathy. For lesson planning purposes, I utilized Responsive Classroom's *Engaging Academics Planning Guide* (Center for Responsive Schools, 2017a). The *Engaging Academic Planning Guide* taps into the power of the natural learning cycle. Educational theorist, such as, Dewey (1938, 1963) and Piaget (1923, 1959), tell us that learning follows a three part natural cycle. This cycle begins with a goal for learning, exploration of the topic/new skills, and reflection of the learning (Center for Responsive Schools, 2017a). The *Engaging Academics Planning Guide* capitalizes on the Natural Learning Cycle and comprises of 6 fundamental parts. The 6 fundamental pieces include:

- Open-ended questions
- Academic Choice

- Morning Meeting connections
- Interactive Modeling
- Guided Discovery
- Language of Learning Skills (Center for Responsive Schools, 2017a)

According to The Center for Responsive Schools, the benefit of open-ended questions are the possibility to stimulate and stretch students' curiosity, reasoning ability, creativity, and independence thus, leading to learning more broadly and deeply. Open-ended questions that are asked by the teacher during and after lessons are a great way to help students synthesize new material, think critically about their work, and identify new directions in learning (2017). Examples of open-ended questions include, "What are some ways you figured that out?" and "How is that strategy helping you?" This type of questioning provides opportunity for the student to provide insight on their learning. The teacher's role in open-ended questioning is to provide a framework, by using open-ended questions, for students to actively reflect on their own learning.

The second fundamental piece is academic choice. This contributes to a students' sense of autonomy in learning and gives students a degree of control over their daily lives which helps students engage more deeply with their academic work. Offering academic choice allows teachers to meet the wide range of academic levels in the classroom making differentiation part of the daily academic routine. The teacher's role in academic choice is to provide a range of appropriate and meaningful academic activities and guide students to an academic choice that is academically appropriate for their learning level (Center for Responsive Schools, 2017a).

Morning Meeting is a fundamental piece of a Responsive Classroom (Kriete & Davis, 2014). Morning Meeting is a community building class meeting held each morning and is comprised of deliberate components, which all adults and students participate. Each component's goal is to create a safe, friendly, trusting classroom community in which all can learn. The four components are:

1. Greeting: All greet each other by name
2. Sharing: All share important events in their lives
3. Activity: All participate in a short activity to foster classroom community
4. Morning Message: Students read an interactive message to give them a preview of the day's learning

The teacher's role in Morning Meeting is that of a guide leading the students enthusiastically through the four parts of the meeting. Making certain that all students and adults are included and establishing the tone for the day's learning (Kriete & Davis 2014).

The final pieces of Engaging Academics are interactive modeling and guided discovery. A teacher uses Interactive Modeling when teaching an academic skill, social skill, procedure or routine that is done in one specific way for safety or efficiency reasons. There are seven specific steps to take when using Interactive Modeling. These steps allow behaviors to be explained, modeled, and practiced allowing for student and teacher feedback. A teacher could use interactive modeling to teach students the procedures for taking a test or quiet work time, for example, front loading the procedures allows more time for teaching and learning. Finally, guided discovery, is a five step strategy for educators to use to generate interest and excitement



about a classroom resource that has many uses, such as modeling clay. In these five student-led steps, the teacher guides the class in introduction and naming of the material, ideation of use and care of the material, exploration, sharing of exploration, and clean up and care of material. The students are the guides while the teacher provides a framework for the students to share their knowledge of the use and care of classroom materials (Center for Responsive Schools, 2017b).

To this end, best practices have been explored to provide lesson plans that are engaging and use the power of the Natural Learning Cycle to promote students' thinking and learning. An overview of my five lessons is provided below. Each lesson is trade-book based and reflects the six fundamental pieces of the Natural Learning Cycle. I have intentionally created these lessons to answer the question how can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community where all students feel safe and respected in our culturally diverse classrooms?

### **Participants**

The participants in my project are students in a third grade classroom in a suburban Metro district in the upper midwest. This classroom has 28 students; approximately 25% of the students qualify for ESL services. It is my goal to provide bullying prevention and intervention follow up instruction for the participants in fourth and fifth grade. Later I will implement lessons in grades K-5.

### **Location and Setting**

The location of this project will be a third grade elementary classroom in a suburban metro district in the upper Midwest. This elementary school has approximately 750 students enrolled, 40% of which come from culturally diverse backgrounds. The elementary school for which this project will be created is a suburban public school, located in the Midwest. The school

serves students in pre-kindergarten classrooms through fifth grade. The student population consists of 594 students, of which, 30.3% are identified as students of lower socioeconomic status. These students would qualify for free or reduced lunch. The demographic composition of the student population for the 2018 school year consists of 13.8% Hispanic/Latino students, 8.1% Black/African American students, 7.9% Asian American students, 64.1% White students, 0.3% American Indian/Alaska Native students and .2% students of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander heritage. Within the school, 14.1% of the student population is identified as having limited English Proficiency (LEP) and 13.6% of the student population qualify for special education services. (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE] “Report Card” (2018).)

### **Duration of Project**

I created five, forty-five minute bullying prevention and intervention lessons based upon ethnicity and culture for third grade students. Each lesson is tailored to fit into my district’s current bullying curriculum, *Second Step*. I will begin my instruction with a bullying survey to gauge the atmosphere in the classroom and school. I will provide the bullying survey to students mid-year and at the end of the school year to assess the effectiveness of the implemented program.

### **Significance for Stakeholders Based on the Literature**

**EL students** stand to gain social competencies through SEL lessons and instruction on cultural, ethnicity and, immigration status. These lessons will examine relevant topics and provide connections, a sense of community, and compassion towards peers.

**General education students** will gain social competencies and a greater understanding through SEL and cultural, ethnic, and/or immigration status. These lessons will examine relevant

topics and provide connections, a sense of community, compassion towards peers, and purposeful development of empathy in our students.

**General Education Teachers** have a great deal of power to create a positive classroom community and prevent bullying. My goal is to provide general education teachers bullying lessons based on culture, ethnicity, and/or immigration status that will easily fit into the *Second Steps* bullying prevention program. In teaching these lessons, educators will provide relevant lessons on topics to support all students in the classroom.

**Elementary Supervisory Staff** have much influence to prevent bullying behaviors because of their contact with a large population of the school. Conscientious playgrounds, hallway, and lunchroom supervision can diminish victimization and provide a more safe and positive school environment.

**EL Teachers** have a close working relationship with EL students and their families. They are able to support bullying victims and victimizers. Their unique role allows them special access to EL students and their unique challenges.

**School Administrators** school administrators serve to ensure that the school building is a safe, tolerant place for students to learn. It is an administrator's task to ensure compliance in bullying prevention and education.

**Parents of all students** are an invaluable resource in combating bullying. A partnership between teachers and parents is critical to ensure safety and respect in classrooms. Parent should receive education on types of bullying, and be provided information regarding what their child is learning as part of the program. Topics should include: risks for victims, and support for victims and victimizers (stopbullying.gov, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter highlighted the lessons created to educate students on basic needs of all children, culture, immigration, immigrants' contributions to the world and empathy. Chapter Three also highlighted the important role of the stakeholders based on the literature review. My hope is that these lessons that will fill in the gap in the current bullying prevention program. As I look critically at bullying research, I notice some significant gaps. There has been much research on bullying, but much more intense research on bullying based on ethnicity, culture and/or immigration status needs to be investigated. I designed lessons that seamlessly fit into the current district adopted curriculum and are easily taught, for optimal teacher buy-in, to successfully serve the students I teach. In Chapter Four, I will discuss my reflections, conclusions drawn, next steps, and final thoughts on this project.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Reflections and Conclusions

#### Overview

The purpose of this project was to answer the question *how can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community where all students feel safe and respected in our culturally diverse classrooms?* Based on the review of current research, I identified missing elements of current bullying intervention and prevention. This led me to create lessons to fill in the missing pieces in current education to prevent bullying. Chapter Three introduced the SEL *Second Step* and *Second Step* bullying prevention programs. Next, Chapter Three outlined the design framework that was utilized, Responsive Classroom's *Engaging Academics Planning Guide*. Then the chapter focused on Responsive Classroom ideology, and the lessons I created to educate students on the basic needs of all children, culture, immigration, immigrants' contributions to the world and using empathy to combat bullying. Finally, background information was given on participants, location, setting, duration of the project, and stakeholders.

After completing the research, I have come to final conclusions that I will share in Chapter Four. This chapter will discuss the process of designing a curriculum for 3rd graders to answer the question *how can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community where all students feel safe and respected in our culturally diverse classrooms?* Second, I will discuss the lessons created, which hopefully will lead to increased empathy and compassion towards immigrants/EL students, possibly minimizing bullying. Next, I will discuss my findings and describe how current research does not lead to clear conclusion about incidents of bullying in the political climate, drawing a link to the literature review to support my rationale for creating the

lessons. I then will discuss the limitations and implications of these lessons. Subsequently, I will discuss the future of the project and the steps that will be taken to broaden the lessons to grade five. Finally, I will discuss my final thoughts and personal reflection on my family's story of immigration.

### **Curriculum Design Process**

During the process of designing curriculum, I reviewed current literature, policy, best practices, and bullying prevention and intervention programs. *Throughout my research*, my central focus remained providing insight for educators to ensure all students feel safe and respected in the classroom. It was my aim to move beyond currently offered bullying lessons and construct meaningful activities that highlighted difference to promote bullying prevention through empathy and shared experience. Throughout the process of creating these lesson I utilized the Engaging Academic Planning Guide (Center for Responsive Schools, 2017). This guide provided a framework for my lesson development. My intent was to create lessons to supplement the present district adopted bullying curriculum for grade 3, *Second Step, Bullying Prevention Unit*. These lessons utilize engaging trade books to capture the attention of the learner and elicit the main teaching point of the lesson.

There were challenges faced during the curriculum design process. These challenges included aligning the lessons to academic standards, finding grade level appropriate trade books, and selecting the most beneficial prevention topics. Aligning the lessons to academic standards was essential to the design process. In the design process I referred to both the 2017 Minnesota Academic Standards (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017) and Common Core Standards (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2018) to align the lessons. I strived to design lessons

that were meaningful, engaging, and practical for teachers. I discovered and utilized [socialjusticebooks.org](http://socialjusticebooks.org) to choose anti-bias children's trade books in the topics covered in the lessons. [Socialjusticebooks.org](http://Socialjusticebooks.org) was a tremendous resource in aiding the choice of exceptional trade books. A considerable amount of time was spent reviewing the scholarship to narrow down lesson ideas which meet my goal of combating bullying with empathy, and shared experience. The created lessons are a small intervention piece in the large bullying prevention puzzle. It is my hope that the lessons contribute to a safe and respectful classroom environment.

### **The Curriculum**

In the lessons created I sought to find ways to foster discussion on community, shared experience, empathy and as a result, decrease bullying. In this context, the scholarship of Bajaj, et al. (2016) resonated with me. The inquiry in which the authors tackle bullying based on xenophobia provided insight and a vision for my project. In the following lessons I focused on the needs of all students, with the goal of bullying prevention and intervention. While there is no "one size fits all" curriculum (Swearer & Hymel, 2015), it is my hope that when properly utilized, these lessons will provide educators with tools to instruct, provide learning experiences, and encourage dialogue around difference.

The key characteristics of this project, that make it effective, thorough lesson plans, accessibility to the resource materials, and a school-home connection component. The lessons are designed to be practical with high interest trade books to spark curiosity and dialogue. The final project will be organized in a clear plastic file folder tote. Each lesson will be clearly marked and arranged in its allocated file. All necessary materials, including trade books and consumables, will be gathered and provided. This tote will be accessible to all elementary

teachers in my school district. The next step will be the piloting of the lessons in my third grade classroom in the fall of 2018. After a comprehensive pilot, I will make any adjustments or improvements to the lessons to ensure they are meeting the objectives of the project. I then will provide an overview of the lessons to interested educators and make the project materials available for use. In the future, my aim is to create lessons for grades four and five.

### **Literature Review Revisited**

My rationale for addressing bullying based on ethnicity, culture, immigration status, and/or qualification of English language services is multi-layered. Through the lens of an educator and researcher, I investigated current scholarship and bullying to answer the question *how can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community where all students feel safe and respected in our culturally diverse classrooms?* In the review of the literature I worked to form connections between the current research on conventional bullying, bullying based on bias, bullying based on the adverse political climate all while examining bullying intervention and prevention programming.

It is unclear whether the current political environment suggests correlation or a definite causation as it relates to high incidence of bullying in schools. As mentioned previously, Hymel and Swearer, found that bullying has been documented in literature since the 19th century (2009). It should also be noted that conventional bullying has been researched extensively for years (stopbullying.gov, 2017), yet the data between today's political climate and bias bullying is incomplete (stopbullying.gov). Research conducted by Farmer suggested through the implementation of a SEL curriculum and intervention programs, schools took positive steps toward addressing bullying behaviors among their students (2000). This aforementioned analysis



guided my project creation, which was solidified by Bajaj et al. (2016). In the research provided Bajaj et al., noted that they created a curriculum to “expand the empathic frame of who is American, human and worthy of dignity” (Bajaj et al. (2016), p. 482). It was with that frame, I commenced to design my project drawing conclusions based upon previous research.

### **Limitations and Implications**

**Limitations** Theoretically, I have produced lessons which are engaging, practical, and standards based. Although I have worked to produce high quality lessons, the possible foreseen limitations include, teacher worldview, quality of lesson delivery, availability of shared lesson materials, and student buy-in. Once I have piloted the lessons in my third grade classroom, I will review the quality of the lessons and make improvements as needed. Then, I will provide an inservice training for interested third grade teachers. It is my hope that teachers will see the value in the lessons as a guide to embark in a dialogue to decrease bullying, not as a burden or “one more thing to teach” during the loaded school year. I worked to make the lessons as accessible and as teachable as possible, but acknowledge that teachers may not see the benefit in addressing bullying through this lens. Furthermore, I do not have control of the quality of the lesson delivery or proper utilization of the lessons. I am eager to hear responses from other educators on the quality of the lessons, teachability, and quality of trade books and welcome conversations with other educators to improve the lessons and overall teaching and learning experience. These lessons are only one small piece to use as a guide to embark on dialog to increase awareness and empathy, and to decrease bullying.

## **Implications**

It is my hope that these lessons will not only prove to be an effective agent in creating a classroom community and environment where all students can feel safe and respected, but also contribute to a much greater dialogue and provide a channel for collaboration among educators in my district and beyond.

## **Final Thoughts**

In approaching this project I reflected on my family's history of immigration and the hardships they faced to become American. It was not surprising to learn that my ancestors' dangerous journeys' across vast oceans to the United States were based on some of the same reasons that immigrants are emigrating to the United States today.

George Chatfield, my 8th great-grandfather, journeyed to North America from Sussex, England in 1639. George and his two brothers were Puritans and fled England for religious freedom (Sharpe, 1896). Four years ago, I travelled to Sweden in search of my family's roots in Holmestad, Skaraborg, Västra Götaland, Sweden. Through personal communication and a thorough examination of church records I found my 2nd great grandmother, Alma Josephine Bäckman. I was fascinated to discover that for two years she worked and saved money so she and her two year old daughter could eventually emigrate from Gothenburg Sweden in 1907. In the time before her departure, Sweden had crop failure and famine, because of this Alma Josephine couldn't find work as a farm *piga*. Last week, my son and I travelled to my 5<sup>th</sup> great grandfather, Jesse Chatfield's, farm in Stillwater, New York. This farmstead is on the Saratoga Battlefield National Park and was used as an outpost for the second battle of Saratoga in 1777. American and British soldiers exchanged shots, across the ravine beyond the ridge, on his

farmstead before the second battle of Saratoga began (National Park Service, 2018). As I gazed over the ridge, I thought about my patriot grandfather's fight for freedom and the battle that took place over 200 years ago to form our country. My ancestor's immigration stories have familiar themes and similar struggles as immigrants today.

#### **Summary of Chapter Four**

My commitment to children and social justice guided my exploration of bullying based on ethnicity, culture, immigration status, and/or qualification of EL services. Throughout this project I sought to answer the question *how can a teacher promote and foster a classroom community where all students feel safe and respected in our culturally diverse classrooms?* My project was guided by current research and policy. Conclusions drawn from these sources have lead me to create five lessons to guide educators in the cultivation of a classroom where all students can feel safe and respected. Nevertheless, much more research on effective, anti-bias bullying curriculum is essential.

A fundamental conclusion drawn from this project is the importance of educators and the classroom environment to act as an agent of change for all students.

### APPENDIX: Lessons to Build Community and Compassion

Grade 3	Lessons to build Community and Compassion
<p><b>I Can Statement:</b> I can compare languages, foods and traditions of diverse groups in my community and region. <b>Standard:</b> 3.3.1.1.2</p>	<p><b>Lesson 1: Children Around the World</b> <b>Essential Question:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What basic needs do all humans have?</li> <li>● What do you have in common with children around the world?</li> <li>● What are some differences between you and children around the world?</li> </ul>
<p><b>I Can Statement:</b> I can use non-fiction books to explore how cultures borrow and shared from each other. <b>Standard:</b> 3.4.1.2.2</p>	<p><b>Lesson 2: Culture</b> <b>Essential Question:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is culture?</li> <li>● How are cultures the same?</li> <li>● How are cultures different?</li> </ul>
<p><b>I Can Statement:</b> I can create and interpret simple Maps of places around the world, local to global; incorporate the “TODALS” map basics. <b>Standard:</b>3.3.1.1.2</p>	<p><b>Lesson 3: Countries of Origin</b> <b>Essential Question:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● From what countries did you ancestors emigrate?</li> <li>● Why did your ancestors immigrate to the United States?</li> </ul>
<p><b>I Can Statement:</b> I can give examples of individuals or groups who have had an Impact on world history and explain how their actions helped shape the world around them. <b>Standard:</b> 3.4.2.5.1</p>	<p><b>Lesson 4: Immigrants in History</b> <b>Essential Question:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do you know contributions immigrants have made to the United States?</li> </ul>
<p><b>I Can Statement:</b> I can compare and contrast two different accounts of an event. <b>Standard:</b> 3.4.1.2.2</p>	<p><b>Lesson 5: Empathy and Cultural Competence</b> <b>Essential Question:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What does it mean to put yourself in someone else’s shoes?</li> <li>● What kinds of behaviors show that you understand someone’s feelings?</li> </ul>

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