Findings from the National Education Association's Nationwide Study of Bullying:

Teachers' and Education Support Professionals' Perspectives

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Great Public Schools for Every Student

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The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.

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The National Education Association (NEA) has a long history of involvement in bullying prevention efforts. In the mid-1990s, the NEA membership mandated that the Association create a training program for its members on student-to-student sexual harassment and bullying. In response, NEA developed curricula on these topics and has continuously offered such training since that time.
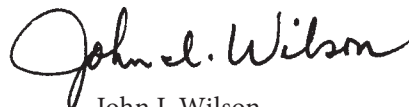
Still, it's possible that what we think we know about bullying isn't all we need to know. With 3.2 million members nationwide, the NEA is in an ideal position to address the critical issue of bullying through its current programs, while simultaneously advancing the field through rigorous research. Finding the right answers is critical to NEA's mission of ensuring a quality education for every student.

This study of staff members' perceptions of bullying represents an important step in enhancing our understanding of the perspectives of teachers and education support professionals. To our knowledge, it represents the first large-scale nationwide study examining different staff members' perspectives on bullying and bullying prevention efforts.

We hope these findings will inform the creation of professional development and training materials tailored for different school staff, as well as for those working with various groups of students across different grade levels and community contexts. Bullying robs students of their opportunity to learn. It is our shared responsibility to ensure that every child can attend a safe public school.

Dennis Van Roekel
President

John I. Wilson
Executive Director

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Executive Summary

Bullying affects nearly 30 percent of school-aged youth on a monthly basis (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Murton, and Scheidt, 2001). Research indicates that many of these students will experience academic, interpersonal, and physical and mental health problems as a consequence of their involvement in bullying (O'Brennan, Bradshaw, and Sawyer, 2009; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, and Hymel, 2010). These findings on the impact of bullying on students and on the school environment illustrate a need for improved bullying intervention and prevention efforts in schools across the country.

The National Education Association (NEA) has a long history of involvement in bullying intervention and prevention.[1] With 3.2 million members nationwide, the NEA is in an ideal position to both address the critical issue of bullying through its existing programs and to advance the research on staff members' perceptions of and involvement in bullying intervention and prevention. Toward that end, the NEA recently drew upon its membership to launch a national study of school staff members' perceptions of bullying. The study's overall goal was to identify strengths and areas of need related to bullying in order to inform the next phase of intervention and prevention, both within the NEA and in collaboration with other agencies. This report summarizes study findings in an effort to promote collaboration in schools across America.

The data were collected from a nationally representative sample of 5,064 NEA members—including 2,163 professional staff (Teachers[2]) and 2,901 education support professionals (ESPs[3])—in April 2010 using either a Web- or phone-based survey. The sample was designed to allow for comparisons across grade level and job category, with particular emphasis on ESPs, who have been largely overlooked in previous research on bullying (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and O'Brennan, 2010a).

Data from the survey indicated that members perceived bullying to be a problem in their school; they witnessed bullying frequently and students reported it to them in large numbers. Although approximately 43 percent of NEA members perceived bullying to be a moderate or major problem at their school, over half of the members surveyed

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[1] In the mid-1990s, the NEA membership mandated that the Association create a training program for its members on student-to-student sexual harassment and bullying. The NEA developed and constantly updated training curricula on these topics and has continued to conduct such training since that time.

[2] 'Teachers' includes classroom teachers, special educators, remedial/ESL, librarians, counselors, and other professional staff. Because the majority of the professional staff group was teachers, this entire group is referred to as Teachers, with a capital T, throughout this report.

[3] 'ESPs' includes paraprofessionals, maintenance staff, clerical staff, school transportation staff, food service staff, security staff, health and student services, technical staff and skilled trades staff, and other non-teaching support staff.

(62%) indicated that they had witnessed bullying two or more times in the last month and 41 percent indicated that they had witnessed bullying once a week or more. Teachers reported witnessing significantly more students being bullied at their school in the past month than did ESPs. Teachers also viewed bullying as a significantly greater problem at their school than did ESPs. Although more Teachers (45%) than ESPs (35%) indicated that a student reported bullying to them within the past month, both groups of staff members indicated equally that parents had reported bullying to them (16%). Staff working in middle schools and in urban areas were more likely to report that they had frequently witnessed bullying (66% and 65%, respectively) and were more likely to perceive it as a serious problem (59% and 54%, respectively).

Bullying takes many forms, with school staff reporting that verbal (59%), social/relational (50%), and physical (39%) forms were of greater concern in their school than was cyberbullying (17%). The most common form of bullying reported to both Teachers and ESPs was verbal bullying, whereas cyberbullying and sexting were the least likely to be reported. Members also reported that bullying based on a student's weight (23%), gender (20%), perceived sexual orientation (18%), or disability (12%) were of concern in their school. Although Teachers generally reported feeling more comfortable intervening with different forms of bullying than did ESPs, all staff members reported being the least comfortable intervening in bullying situations related to sexual orientation and gender issues.

There was a discrepancy between the existence of school district bullying policies and staff members' self-reported training on these policies. Although the vast majority of school employees (93%) reported that their district had implemented a bullying prevention policy, just over half of all staff (54%) had received training related to the policy. Furthermore, ESPs were significantly less likely to report that they had received training on their policy (46%) than Teachers (55%). Staff in urban schools, where the rates of staff-reported bullying were highest, were less likely to report the existence of district policy (88%) and less likely to have received training on the policy (51%). Over 80 percent felt their district's policy was adequate, and approximately 80 percent thought it was clear and easy to implement.

Although school staff reported a willingness to intervene in bullying situations, less than 40 percent of staff reported being directly involved in formal bullying prevention activities. Across all school levels and communities, nearly all participants (98%) said they thought it was "their job" to intervene when they witnessed bullying incidents. Overall, however, only 58 percent reported that their school had implemented formal bullying prevention activities such as school teams, a committee, or a prevention program. Even fewer reported the presence of such prevention activities in schools located in urban areas (47%) and in high schools (51%). Teachers (42%) were significantly more likely to indicate direct involvement in bullying prevention activities than were ESPs (27%). The lowest overall level of staff involvement was in high schools (24%).

An important predictor of staff members' willingness to intervene in bullying situations was their perception of connectedness to the school, defined here as "the belief held by adults in the school that they are valued as individuals and professionals involved in the learning process." Staff who were more connected to their school were more likely to feel comfortable intervening in all forms of bullying. Staff with higher feelings of connectedness were also more likely to report being comfortable intervening in several different types of bullying situations. Both Teachers and ESPs—particularly the

latter—reported high levels of connectedness. Two factors were significantly correlated with greater comfort intervening in bullying situations: 1) having effective strategies and 2) perceiving that others in the school were also likely to intervene. These two factors remained significant across all examined forms of bullying and of bullying that targets special student populations.[4]

Although the majority of all staff reported that they already had effective strategies for handling bullying situations, several professional development needs were identified. For example, cyberbullying and sexting were identified as areas where all staff needed additional training. More ESPs reported needing professional development on how to intervene in situations involving physical bullying, verbal bullying, relational bullying, and sexting than did Teachers. With regard to special populations, areas of greatest need for additional training related to sexual orientation, gender issues, and disability, with ESPs reporting a greater need than Teachers. ESPs were more likely than Teachers to report that they had resources available to them when faced with a bullying situation.

Taken together, these findings provide great insight into school staff members' perceptions of bullying, including the unique perspectives of different groups of ESPs (e.g., school transportation staff, food service staff, security staff) who are often overlooked in the literature. To our knowledge, the NEA Bullying Study is the only large-scale nationwide study that examines different staff members' perspectives on bullying intervention and prevention. As such, it helps to elucidate the specific needs of various groups of adults who work in schools across the country. These findings may also inform the creation of professional development and training materials tailored for different school staff, as well as for those working with special populations of students across different grade levels and community contexts.

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[4] 'Special student populations' is used here to include groups that are the target of bullying due to some particular identifying factor, such as sexual orientation, disability, or weight, for example.

Background and Significance

Bullying is broadly defined as intentional and repeated acts of a threatening or demeaning nature that occur through direct verbal (e.g., threatening, name calling), direct physical (e.g., hitting, kicking), and indirect (e.g., spreading rumors, influencing relationships, cyberbullying) means and that typically occur in situations in which there is a power or status difference (Olweus, 1993). Prior research has shown that it is one of the most common forms of aggression and victimization experienced by school-aged children (Nansel et al., 2001; Veenstra, Lindenberg, Oldehinkel, De Winter, Verhulst, and Ormel, 2005). Almost one in three (30%) youths experience bullying "once a week" or "several times a week," with 11 percent reporting being a victim, 13 percent reporting being a bully, and 6 percent reporting being both a bully and a victim (Nansel et al., 2001). It is estimated that nearly all students will have some type of exposure to bullying by the time they graduate high school (Dinkes, Kemp, and Baum, 2009; Hoover, Oliver, and Hazler, 1992). The associated negative effects of bullying include a range of academic, social, emotional, physical health, and mental health problems (e.g., Berger, 2007; Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, and Perry, 2003; Espelage and Swearer, 2003, 2004; Fekkes, Pijpers, Fredriks, Vogels, and Verloove-Vanhorick, 2006). The sections below outline some key findings within the bullying literature, which informed the current study related to staff members' perceptions of bullying.

Student and Staff Perceptions of the Problem of Bullying

Prior research suggests that students and school staff often view the problem of bullying and schools' efforts to prevent it quite differently (Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan, 2007; Doll, Song, and Siemers, 2004; Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005). One study found that, while a large portion of staff (87%) thought that they had effective strategies for handling a bullying situation and 97 percent of staff reported that they would intervene if they witnessed bullying, only 21 percent of students involved in bullying had reported the event to a school staff member (Bradshaw et al., 2007). Students were more likely to report bullying events to their friends and families than to an adult at school (Waasdorp and Bradshaw, in press).

Although it appears that students are not actively seeking out help from Teachers when dealing with a bullying situation, it is possible that students may turn to ESPs (e.g., school nurses, transportation staff, teacher's aides) as a means of support. However, few studies have specifically examined ESPs' perceptions of bullying intervention. For instance, Leff, Power, Costigan, and Manz (2003) designed a measure that was explicitly intended to assess the bullying climate on the playground and the lunchroom (known as

the Playground and Lunchroom Climate Questionnaire, or PLCQ). This measurement tool is among the first to highlight the importance of the perceptions of those personnel who oversee these high-risk areas. The authors also underscore the importance of collaboration between teaching and non-teaching staff. It appears that few ESPs are included in school-wide intervention and prevention efforts. An exploratory, qualitative study of transportation staff by deLara (2008) revealed that ESP workers not only notice a considerable amount of bullying, but most also feel that they were not included in the district's school safety planning efforts. Similarly, an assessment of school nurses' perceptions revealed that nurses perceive many barriers when dealing with bullying, such as a need for more information regarding how to identify bullies and victims and knowledge of which behaviors to report to administrators (Hendershot, Dake, Price and Lartey, 2006).

School Climate and Connectedness

Positive school climate is recognized as an important component of successful and effective schools (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, and Dumas, 2003). A growing number of studies have identified school connectedness as a key construct in students' perceptions of their school climate and, consequently, connectedness may play an important role in bullying intervention and prevention. The more connected students feel to the individuals at their school (e.g., teachers, peers, staff), the more likely they are to experience positive outcomes in other areas of their life and the less likely they are to engage in risky behaviors. There is also increasing recognition of the importance of school connectedness and school organizational factors for staff wellbeing and productivity. For example, research has shown that, when school staff feel supported by their administration they report higher levels of commitment and more collegiality, and there is increased staff retention (Singh and Billingsley, 1998).

Several studies have highlighted the importance of staff perceptions of the school climate (e.g., the schools' organizational health) for high work productivity, staff efficacy, and focus on student success (Bevans, Bradshaw, Miech, and Leaf, 2007; Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993; Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, and Leaf, 2010). In contrast, when teaching staff experience high levels of burnout or feel emotionally exhausted, their relationships with students and the quality of their teaching suffer (Maslach, 1976; Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Furthermore, low efficacy or negative beliefs about their ability to teach demonstrate less effective teaching practices, which is associated with poorer student achievement (Bandura, 1977; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2007).

Although there has been limited research examining these staff factors in relation to bullying intervention and prevention efforts, the available research suggests that staff members' perceptions of the school climate and their own connectedness to the school may bear a significant relationship to those efforts. It is, however, unclear whether staff's perceptions of connectedness vary across different staff groups, such as between Teachers and ESPs, and how those perceptions of connectedness relate to individual staff member's involvement in bullying intervention and prevention.

Evidence-based Approaches

Most researchers agree that multi-component, whole-school intervention and prevention efforts hold the greatest promise for addressing the problem of bullying. These approaches aim to improve the school climate for students and staff by involving all

students, parents, and staff in the effort. Multiple levels of supports are provided to students, including universal activities for all students and staff, more targeted programs for children who have a high risk for exhibiting behavior problems, and individually tailored programs and support services for students already exhibiting difficulties due to their involvement in bullying. An important aspect of multi-component programs is the collection of data, which can guide data-based decision making, inform program selection, identify training needs, and identify hot spots in the school where bullying occurs. Nearly all states have passed laws regarding bullying, many of which focus on mandated reporting, expulsion of aggressors, or zero-tolerance rather than prevention (Casella, 2003; Espelage and Swearer, 2008; Srabstein, Berkman, Pyntikova, 2008). However, there are a number of programs that are designed to prevent bullying-related behaviors (for a review, see Farrington and Ttofi, 2009; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, and Isava, 2008).

Gaps in the Literature

Although there have been gains in identifying the potential causes and consequences of bullying over the past two decades (see reviews by Swearer et al., 2010), a number of gaps in the literature remain. For example, although a large body of research has examined students' perceptions of bullying and school climate (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Goldstein, Young, and Boyd, 2008; Juvonen, Nishina, and Graham, 2006), relatively few studies have examined these issues from the perspective of staff members. The available research suggests that school staff view the issue of bullying differently from students and that students perceive that staff are not responding sufficiently when informed of bullying incidents (Bradshaw et al., 2007). As a result, many students may not actively seek out help from Teachers when dealing with a bullying situation. It is possible that students may turn to ESPs as a means of support, but there has been limited research on this issue. Moreover, we know relatively little about how ESPs view the issue of bullying as compared with their Teacher colleagues.

This gap in the research is particularly disconcerting given that a significant portion of bullying occurs in unstructured areas such as the cafeteria, playground, hallways, and school busses, which are the areas chiefly supervised by ESPs. To date, there have been no systematic studies of ESPs of sufficient size and scope to allow for comparisons with Teachers or among specific ESP subgroups. This issue is of particular importance given that about one-third of adults working within a school are ESPs.

As noted, there is growing interest in the issue of connectedness, yet little work has been done to explore how staff perceptions of connectedness relate to their involvement in bullying intervention and prevention efforts. Furthermore, there may be important differences between ESPs' and Teachers' perceptions of connectedness, since these groups often vary in their level of student interaction, communication with administrators, and involvement in school-wide bullying intervention and prevention efforts. The available research on related constructs, such as organizational health and administrative support, suggests that staff reports of connectedness would be important to examine. However, these are often in reference to other aspects of employee work life, such as job satisfaction, retention, and performance, and are not related to staff involvement in bullying intervention and prevention.

Technology also has ushered in new forms or modes of bullying, often referred to as cyberbullying or cyberaggression. This involves threats, harassment, and harmful

actions via cell phones and the Internet (Williams and Guerra, 2007). A related concern is sexting, which includes creating, sending, posting, or disseminating sexually suggestive text messages, pictures, or videos of oneself or others. These messages often include nude or partially nude photos or images of oneself, which, although initially may be transmitted consensually, could easily be used as material for cyberbullying. To date, there has been little systematic research on staff members' perceptions of cyberbullying, and even less on the more recent issue of sexting.

Related concerns regarding special populations of students have also emerged. This includes sexual minority youth or those who are perceived as gender non-conforming (Berlan Corliss, Field, Goodman, and Austin, 2010; Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, Bartkiewicz, 2009). Also of concern is the rising number of students who are overweight and who may become targets of bullying due to their physical appearance. Students with disabilities are also at greater risk for bullying by peers. Yet little is known about how school staff members view bullying or harassment that is motivated by student characteristics such as race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability as well as staff members' training and support needs related to intervening in and preventing bullying that targets these special populations of students.

Purpose of this Study

The overall goal of the NEA Bullying Study was to identify strengths and areas of need related to bullying intervention and prevention and to inform the next phase of intervention and prevention efforts, both within the NEA and in collaboration with other agencies. Specifically, the issues centered around bullying—particularly cyberbullying and sexting—were identified by NEA members as growing concerns and areas in which additional training and support are needed. Grounded in the available literature and motivated by the needs identified by NEA members and by gaps in the extant research, the NEA Bullying Study was launched to examine the following core research areas.

Exposure to and Concerns about Bullying. We examined staff perceptions of bullying, such as how often it is witnessed, how often it is reported to them, and how much of a problem bullying is perceived to be in the schools where NEA members work. As noted, one of the overarching goals of the NEA survey was to contrast the perspectives and experiences of Teachers and ESPs. This was particularly important in light of the fact that one in three school staff members is an ESP. We also aimed to explore the similarities and differences between these two populations with regard to their perceptions of bullying intervention and prevention efforts.

Staff Experiences with Different Forms of Bullying and Perceptions of Bullying that Targets Special Populations. We examined several different forms of bullying, including physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying, as well as sexting, to better understand ESPs' and Teachers' perspectives and concerns regarding these different types of bullying behavior. Specifically, we compared ESPs' and Teachers' perceptions of how much of a problem each form of bullying was in their schools, how comfortable they felt intervening, how likely other adults at their school are to intervene, and whether students reported various forms of bullying to them. We also examined concerns regarding special populations, specifically students who are gender non-conforming (e.g., GLBT), those who are overweight, and those with disabilities. This issue is of great concern, given

prior research documenting that special populations are at increased risk for bullying and peer victimization (Swearer et al., 2010).

Prevention Policies and Intervention Efforts. We examined staff members' knowledge of and experiences with school district policies related to bullying. This included prior training in the policies and the utility of the policies. Further, we examined staff members' involvement in training sessions or school intervention and prevention efforts and their perceptions of their own efforts as well as other staff members' willingness to intervene in bullying situations. Contrasts were made between Teachers and ESPs, where appropriate, to better understand staff members' differing experiences with and involvement in bullying intervention and prevention.

Link between School Connectedness and Intervention. Although different facets of school climate have been linked with positive outcomes among staff, such as reduced burnout and greater efficacy (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, and Leaf, 2010), there has been limited research examining bullying-related factors in relation to staff reports of school connectedness. As noted, having data from both Teachers and ESPs fills an important gap in the research. We examined differences in perceptions of connectedness, as well as the relationship between connectedness and comfort intervening with different forms of bullying and bullying that targets special populations.

Additional Training and Support Needs. We examined the types of needs and resources that Teachers and ESPs had regarding bullying intervention and prevention. We also examined factors associated with their efficacy in producing desirable outcomes when handling bullying situations. Our goal was to inform the types of training and supports provided by the NEA. This information can also help determine whether ESPs have needs that differ from those of other school staff.

Methodology

The NEA Bullying Survey (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and O'Brennan, 2010a) was developed by the Johns Hopkins research team in close collaboration with the NEA Research Department's Surveys and Data Analysis Unit. Bullying was defined on the survey as "… *intentional and repeated aggressive acts that can be physical (such as hitting); verbal (such as threats or name calling); or relational (such as spreading rumors, or influencing social relationships). Bullying typically occurs in situations where there is a power or status difference.*" The 127 items on the Survey were derived from a variety of research-based measures in order to address the primary research aims. There were five primary topical areas assessed on the Survey: 1) Exposure to and concerns about bullying; 2) Forms of bullying and bullying that targets special populations; 3) Bullying policies and intervention and prevention efforts; 4) School connectedness; and 5) Training and support needs. Additional information regarding the constructs, scales, scale/item sources, and psychometric properties are reported in Appendix A (page 37).

Data Collection Procedure

In an effort to survey a representative sample of NEA members, both a telephone survey (63%) and a Web survey (37%) were used. The data were collected in the Spring of 2010 by Abacus Associates. A total of 1,601 Teachers and 2,142 ESPs completed the *telephone survey*, whereas 562 total Teachers and 759 ESPs completed the *Web survey*. The original unweighted sample was 5,064 (n = 2,163 Teachers and n = 2,901 ESPs). The full weighted sample available for analysis in the current report was 5,056 (n = 4,151 Teachers and n = 905 ESPs). Propensity and rim score weights were applied in this study to account for potential bias from the two survey modes and to weight the entire dataset to the national population of NEA members (see Watts, 2010, for more detail).

Analytic Approaches, Covariates, and Sample Weights

Descriptive, multivariate, and regression analyses were conducted to address the primary research questions.[5] Certain variables were statistically adjusted for in the analyses (i.e., school level, school location, Web vs. phone survey modality, and amount of time spent with students) as they may have influenced participants' responses to survey questions. All analyses also included the two sample weights. Specifically, propensity scores were used to determine the propensity or the likelihood of a respondent in the Web survey

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[5] Significant results are reported in odds ratios (OR) with the corresponding *p-value*. The odds ratio is a statistic used to assess the probability of a particular outcome if a certain factor is present.

being in the telephone survey (Rosenbaum and Rubin, 1983). This method adjusts the Web sample to be comparable to the telephone survey, ideally allowing for dual modes in one survey. The propensity weighting of the Web data was then followed by a rim weighting of the entire merged dataset to known population parameters from the full NEA member database, mostly to compensate for heavy oversampling in the survey design and to mitigate the problem of coverage, selection, and random bias. Thus, the analyses include the rim and propensity score weights in all analyses where possible.

Sample Characteristics

The weighted sample reflects the NEA population, with 82 percent Teachers (classroom teachers 85%, special educators 4%, remedial/ESL 2%, librarians 2%, counselors 3%, and other professional staff 4%) and 18 percent ESPs (paraprofessionals 49%, maintenance staff 14%, clerical staff 10%, school transportation staff 10%, food service staff 7%, security staff 1%, health and student services staff 2%, technical and skilled trades staff 2%, and other non-teaching support staff 6%).[6]

Women represented 80 percent of the sample, and 89 percent self-identified as White (Black 5%, Hispanic 4%, and others 2%). The sample included staff employed in a variety of school locations (suburban 34%, small town 24%, urban 24%, and rural areas 18%). Approximately 39 percent worked with students in elementary, 19 percent in middle, and 27 percent in high schools, with the remaining 16 percent working across multiple grade levels. Roughly 89 percent of participants reported working in one school, around 6 percent said they worked in two schools, and 4 percent said they worked in three or more schools. Not surprisingly, when asked about the level of interaction staff have with students, more Teachers reported having "constant" interaction with students as compared to ESPs. In contrast, approximately 25 percent of ESPs had some or less (i.e., "only a little," "almost none") interaction with students. Because of these marked differences, the percentage of time spent with students was used as a covariate in all analyses in this report, as their level of interaction with students likely influenced respondents' perceptions of bullying and probability for intervention (see Appendix B, page 38).

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[6] With only 18 percent, ESPs are in fact underrepresented among NEA members as they are one in three of the entire population of public school staff in America. Moreover, the job category composition of NEA ESPs also differs from the actual composition in public schools. ESPs working outside the classroom and outside the school building (all job categories except paraprofessionals) represent about half of all NEA ESPs vs. two-thirds for the country as a whole (NEA, 2010). This suggests that the true differences between all ESPs and Teachers may be underestimated in the current study.

Findings

Exposure to and Concerns about Bullying

Approximately 43 percent of staff reported that bullying was a moderate or major problem at their school (see Figure 1, below, and Table 1, page 39) with Teachers viewing bullying as a significantly greater problem than ESPs (OR = 1.38; p <.001). Staff also reported witnessing bullying on their school campus quite frequently. In fact, 62 percent of staff indicated they witnessed two or more incidents of bullying in the last month while 41 percent had witnessed bullying once a week or more (see Figure 2, next page, and Table 2, page 39). Teachers reported witnessing significantly more students being bullied at their school in the past month than did ESPs (OR = 1.25; p < .05). Across school levels and communities, staff working in middle schools and in urban areas were more likely to report that they had frequently witnessed bullying (OR = 1.68; p < .001 and OR = 1.70; p < .001, respectively); they also were more likely to perceive it as a serious problem (OR = 2.42; p < .001 and OR = 1.81; p < .001, respectively).

Figure 1. Percentage of Staff Perceiving Bullying as a Problem
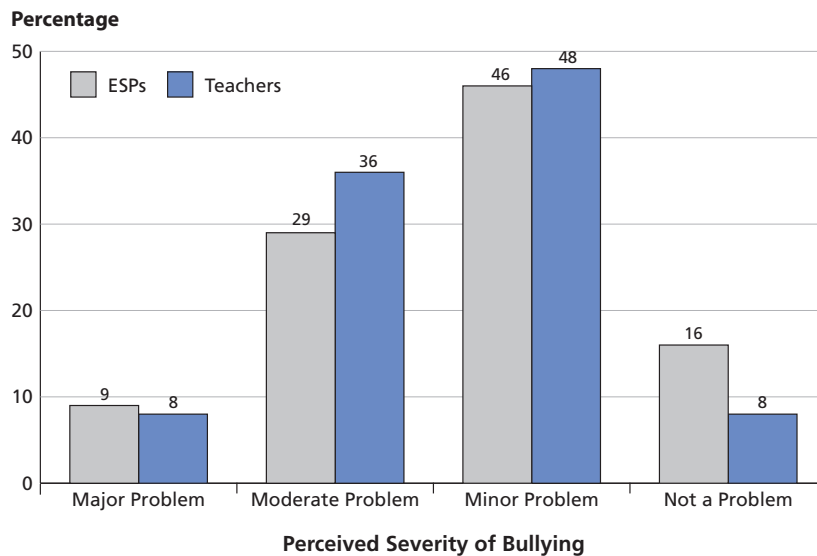
In addition to directly witnessing bullying, roughly half of staff said students often reported bullying incidences to them. However, more Teachers (45%) than ESPs (35%) indicated that a student had reported bullying to them within the past month, with Teachers being 26 percent more likely to report having a student report bullying to them (OR = 1.26; *p* < .05) than ESPs. The more time staff spent interacting with students the more likely students were to report incidences to them (OR = 1.35; *p* < .001). Staff working in middle schools were also more likely to indicate that students reported bullying to them (OR = 1.83; *p* < .001). Conversely, all staff members equally indicated that parents had reported bullying to them (16%).

Figure 2. Percentage of Staff Who Witnessed Bullying During the Past Month

Frequency of Witnessing Bullying
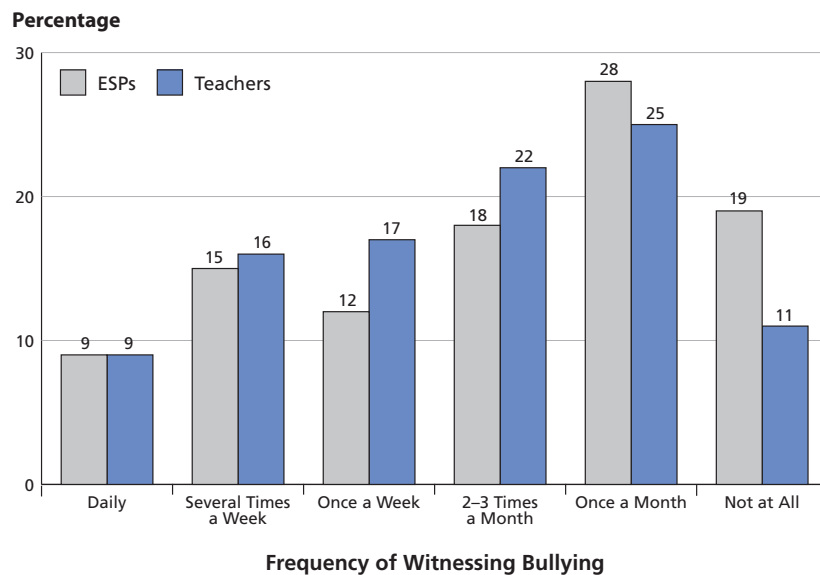
Besides a wide exposure to student-to-student bullying in schools, the survey revealed the presence of some adult-to-adult bullying. Approximately 18 percent of Teachers indicated that they personally were bullied by someone else at the school where they work, whereas 14 percent of ESPs reported that they personally were bullied by someone else (see Figure 3, next page). Teachers were approximately 28 percent more likely to have reported being personally bullied (OR = 1.28; *p* < .05) as compared to ESPs. Additionally, staff working in urban environments were 36 percent more likely to have reported that they were bullied (OR = 1.36; *p* < .001).

Figure 3. Percentage of Staff Who Reported Being Bullied by Different Individuals at Their School
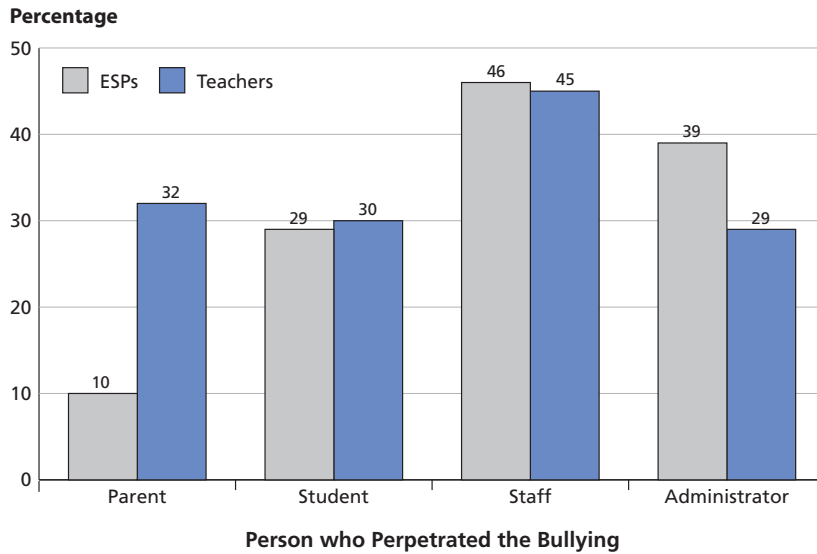
Percentage

Person who Perpetrated the Bullying

Staff Experiences with Different Forms of Bullying and Perceptions of Bullying that Targets Special Populations

Bullying takes many forms, with school staff reporting that verbal (59%), social/relational (50%), and physical (39%) forms were of greater concern in their school than cyberbullying (17%) (see Figure 4, below). Members also reported that bullying based on a student's weight (23%), sexist remarks (20%), perceived sexual orientation (18%), or disability (12%) were of concern in their school (see Figure 5, next page). It is unclear whether these concerns about different forms of bullying are associated with the severity of their consequences.

Figure 4. Percentage of Staff Who Reported Different Types of Bullying Were a Moderate/Major Problem

Percentage

Form of Bullying
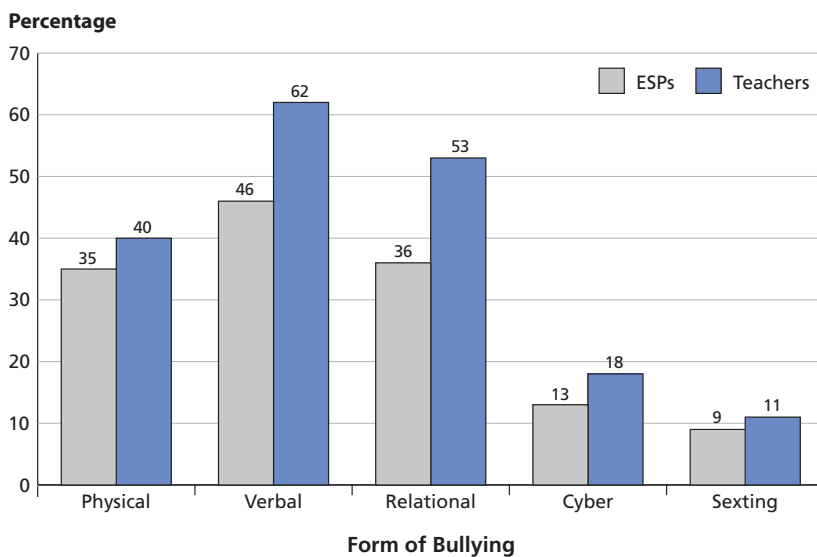
Figure 5. Percentage of Staff Who Reported that Bullying Behaviors Were a Moderate/Major Problem

Percentage

Nature of the Bullying
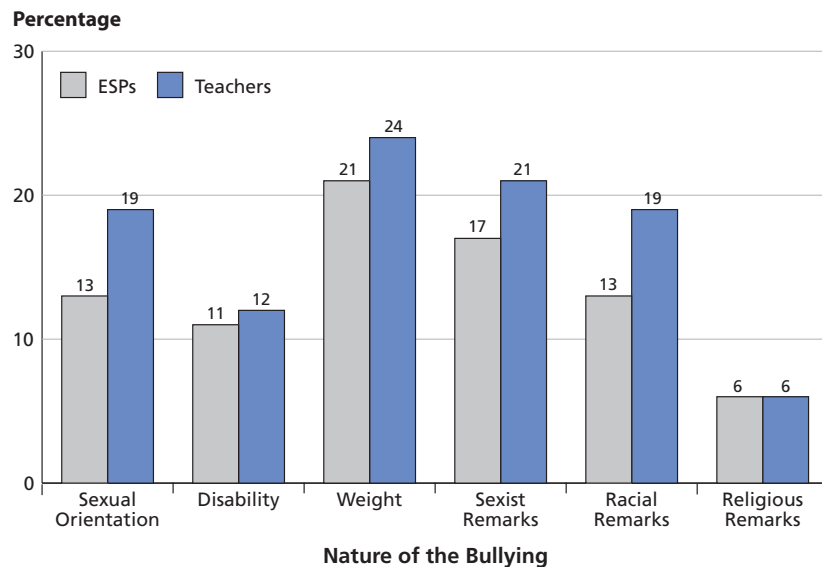
When questioned about the need for additional training, a majority of staff reported the greatest need for training in how to handle cyberbullying and in bullying related to sexual orientation and gender issues. They also reported being the least comfortable intervening in these types of bullying situations. With regard to efficacy to intervene effectively, Teachers generally felt more comfortable intervening with the different forms of bullying than did ESPs. However, both ESPs and Teachers felt the least comfortable intervening with cyberbullying and sexting and the most comfortable intervening in situations related to verbal bullying. This difference is likely related to the secrecy of cyberbullying and sexting since it is not always apparent to staff in the school environment. Nevertheless, these electronic forms of bullying are of considerable concern to students, and intervention strategies should be discussed with all staff.

In general, it appears that staff are least comfortable addressing bullying that relates to students' sexual orientation/gender non-conformity. Across several items addressing sexual orientation, there appeared to be discomfort, lack of knowledge, and a perception that other staff also had concerns about how best to intervene. These findings are especially concerning given studies indicating that GLBT youth are at an increased risk for bullying (e.g., Berlan et al., 2010; Kosciw et al., 2009). These findings suggest school- and district-wide policies need to pay special attention to bullying related to sexual orientation and provide staff with the necessary supports to intervene effectively. Additional training is also needed to increase staff members' comfort with addressing issues related to sexual orientation and to shift school norms regarding bullying related to gender non-conformity. In contrast, there was greater comfort and perceived willingness to intervene in situations where the bullying focused on a student with a disability. This may be a result of other school policies related to children with disabilities (e.g., IDEA).

Prevention Policies and Intervention Efforts

Across all school levels and communities nearly all participants said they thought it was "their job" to intervene when they witnessed bullying incidents (see Figure 6, below, and Table 3, page 40), with Teachers more likely than ESPs to acknowledge responsibility for acting in such situations (OR = 3.09; p < .001). Although the vast majority of all staff thought it was their professional duty to intervene, Teachers were more likely than ESPs to feel responsible for intervening. Some of these differences may be related to staff involvement in bullying intervention and prevention efforts at their schools. Not surprisingly, the more time staff spent interacting with students the more likely they were to report it was their job to intervene (OR = 1.49; p < .001).

Figure 6. Percentage of Staff Who Perceived It Is Their Job to Intervene
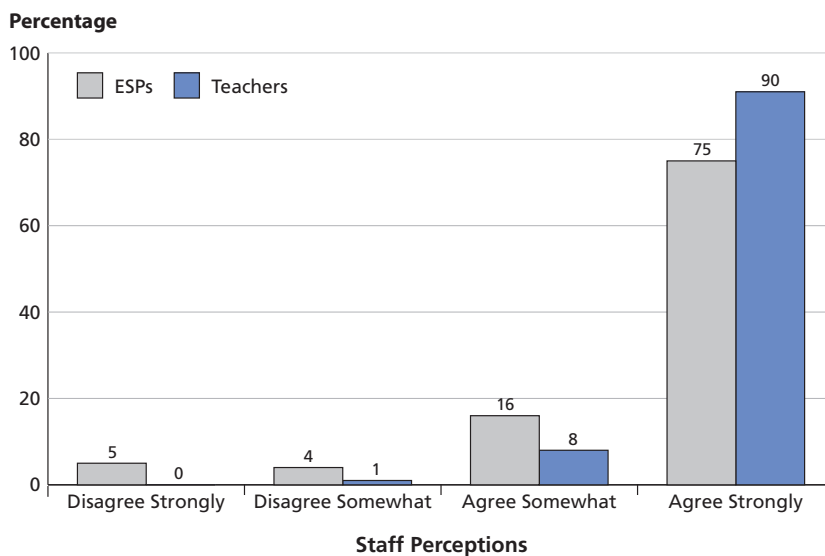
Overall, approximately 60 percent of all respondents said that their school had formal bullying prevention efforts such as school teams, a committee, or a prevention program (see Figure 7, next page, and Table 4, page 40). However, just 42 percent of Teachers and 27 percent of ESPs said they were involved in these efforts. Specifically, Teachers were 65 percent more likely than ESPs to report that they were involved in bullying prevention at their school (OR = 1.65, p < .001). Interestingly, when comparing the two groups, ESPs were more likely to report that their school is doing enough to prevent bullying. Schools located in urban areas (47%) and high schools (51%) reported lower overall levels of such prevention activities. The lowest level of staff involvement in bullying prevention activities was in high schools (24%) (see Table 5, page 41).

There was also a discrepancy between the existence of school district bullying policies and staff members' self-reported training on these policies (see Figure 7, next page, and Tables 6 and 7, pages 41 and 42, respectively). Although the vast majority of school employees reported that their district had implemented a bullying prevention policy, only about half of all staff had received training related to the policy (see Table 7, page 42). ESPs were significantly less likely than Teachers to report that they had received training on their school's policy (45% and 54%, respectively). Specifically, Teachers were 23 percent

more likely than ESPs to report that they had received training on their policy (OR = 1.23, $p < .001$). Yet, the staff in urban schools, where the rates of staff-reported bullying were highest, were significantly less likely to report the existence of a district policy (OR = .51; $p < .001$) and significantly less likely to have received training on the policy (OR = .74; $p < .05$). Over 80 percent of respondents felt their district's policy was adequate, and approximately 80 percent thought it was clear and easy to implement. Taken together, these findings suggest that it would be beneficial for schools to include multiple staff members in the development and implementation of school-wide bullying intervention policies and prevention programs. Urban schools, and also secondary schools, which tend to be larger on average, may need to take additional steps to communicate bullying prevention efforts to all staff members in order to increase program effectiveness.

Figure 7. Percentage of Staff Who Responded 'Yes' Regarding Bullying Policies and Prevention Activities
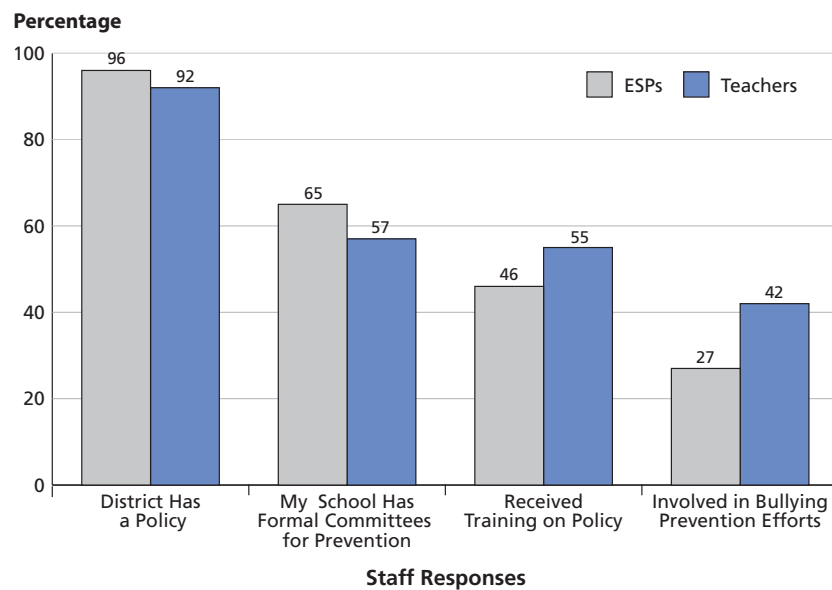
Link between School Connectedness and Intervention

Both ESPs and Teachers reported high levels of staff connectedness. ESPs reported particularly high levels of personal connectedness, of connectedness with the administration, and of overall school community connectedness (see Figure 8, next page). One explanation for this could be the tendency for ESPs to reside within the community served by their school (65% and 39% for ESPs and Teachers, respectively). Living proximate to their school provides advantages that could be leveraged to enhance the role that ESPs already play in bullying intervention and prevention efforts. Feelings of connectedness also varied across school levels and urbanicity, with staff in high schools and in schools located in urban communities reporting the lowest levels of connectedness.

**Figure 8. ESP and Teacher Average Reports of Different Aspects of
            Connectedness, on a Scale from 1 to 4**
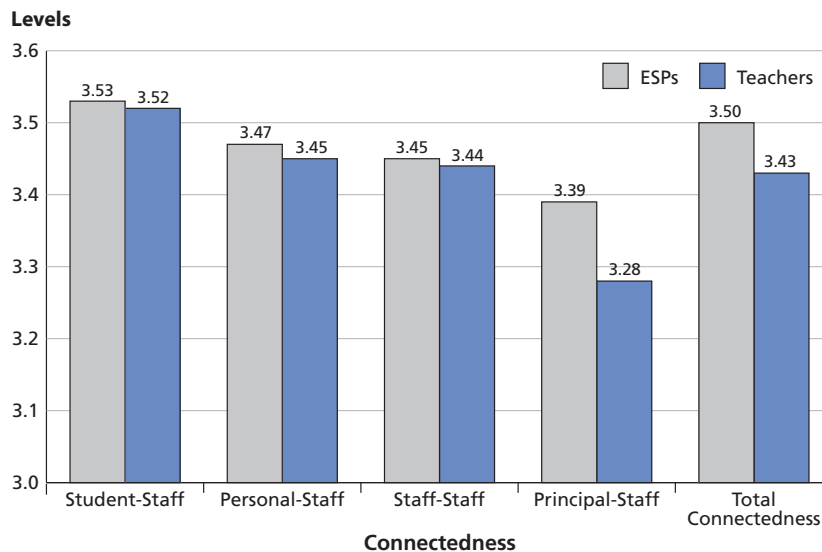
An important predictor of staff members' willingness to intervene in bullying situations was their perception of connectedness to the school. Specifically, school staff members' relationships with their colleagues and school administrators, their perceptions of safety, and their overall sense of belonging within the school community were associated with a greater likelihood of intervening in bullying situations. On average, there was a significant overall difference between ESPs and Teachers[7]—and between those high versus those low on connectedness—on their comfort intervening in different types of bullying situations.[8] Teachers were more comfortable intervening with physical, verbal, and relational bullying than were ESPs; yet, there were no significant differences between ESPs and Teachers on their reported comfort intervening with sexting and cyberbullying. In addition, higher feelings of connectedness were associated with greater comfort when intervening across all forms of bullying (i.e., physical, verbal, relational, cyber, and sexting), even across special student populations (i.e., sexual orientation, disability, overweight, and sexist, racial and religious remarks). Similarly, staff members' perception that other staff in the school were likely to intervene in bullying incidents was associated with a greater likelihood that they would intervene as well. These findings support the use of school-wide climate enhancing programs that promote close relationships across administrators, teaching staff, ESPs, parents, and students. Creating a supportive environment within a school can model positive social interactions for students, which may in turn reduce the likelihood of bullying.

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[7] Wilks' Λ (.99), $F = 10.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .01$, $d = .20$

[8] Wilks' Λ (.99), $F = 6.50$, $p < .001$, $\eta 2 = .01$, $d = .20$

Additional Training and Support Needs

There were significant differences in ESPs' and Teachers' reports of their need for additional training in how to intervene in situations involving physical bullying, verbal bullying, relational bullying, and sexting: ESPs reported a greater need than Teachers. There was no difference reported in the need for additional training related to cyberbullying. On average, that was the greatest area of need identified, followed by sexting (see Figure 9, below). There were significant differences in ESPs' and Teachers' reports of their need for additional training in how to intervene in situations involving all special populations examined, such that ESPs reported greater need. The areas of greatest need were additional training related to bullying based on sexual orientation, gender, and disability (see Figure 10, next page).

Figure 9. Percentage of Staff Who Reported a Need for Additional Training in Intervening with Different Forms of Bullying

Percentage

Form of Bullying	ESPs	Teachers
Physical ***	63	51
Verbal ***	60	49
Relational**	62	57
Cyber	73	74
Sexting*	74	71

Form of Bullying
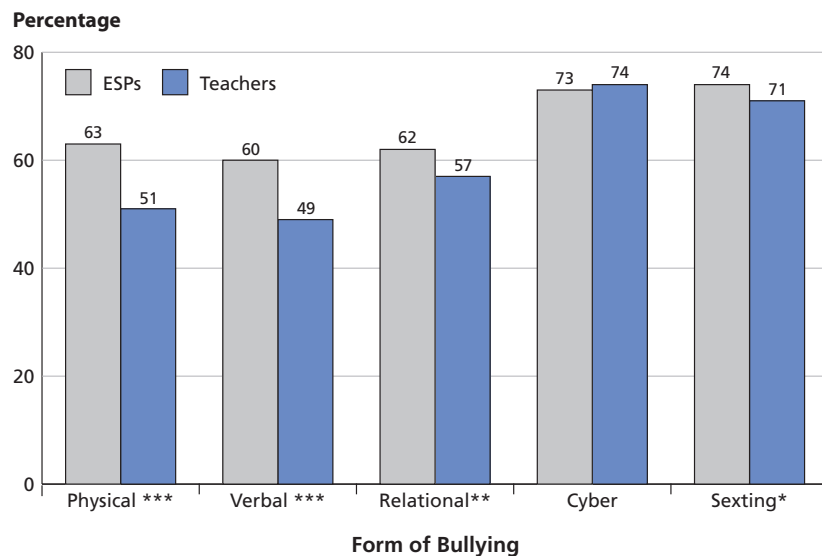
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Figure 10. Percentage of Staff Who Reported a Need for Additional Training in Intervening in Bullying Situations Involving Special Populations, Race, Gender, and Religion

Percentage
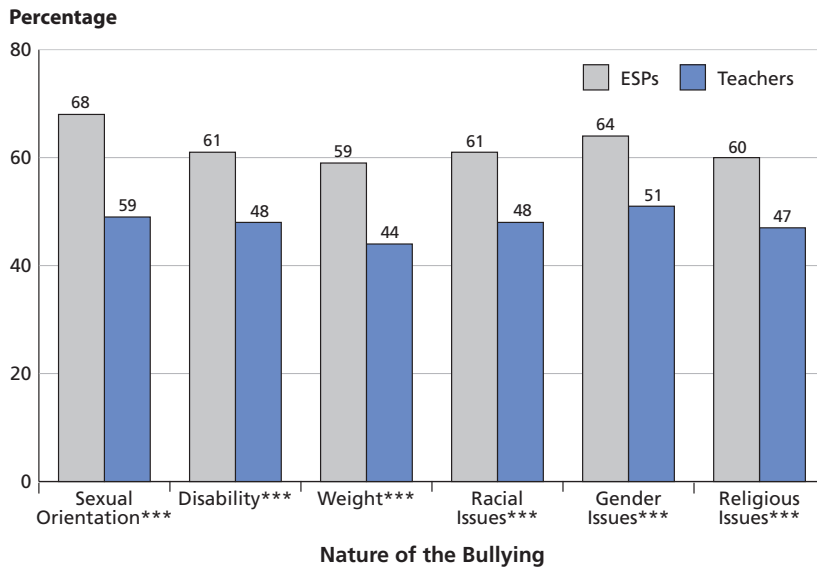
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

A majority of ESPs and Teachers reported having effective strategies for handling bullying. However, ESPs reported a greater need for additional training. The vast majority of ESPs (79%) and Teachers (75%) reported that they had access to resources to help them intervene. Therefore, it is not clear that a lack of resources is a major concern, but perhaps it is the quality or appropriateness of the resources that needs further consideration. Schools can help involve ESPs in bullying intervention and prevention by making sure these individuals are included in staff bullying training, which will help school-wide intervention and prevention efforts. ESPs may often not be aware of bullying policies because they are not able to attend staff meetings. To increase awareness, administrators can create a one-page sheet outlining the school's policies that can be dispersed to all staff members. Moreover, to make intervention and prevention efforts more specific to ESPs' job placements, it may help for schools to directly collaborate with ESP subgroups (e.g., school transportation staff, food service staff) on bullying intervention and prevention strategies so that efforts can be streamlined and made more pertinent to staff members' roles.

Conclusions and Implications

While the literature on bullying and related intervention and prevention efforts has grown significantly over the past 20 years (Berger, 2007; Espelage and Swearer, 2003), there remain a number of gaps in the field's knowledge about multiple aspects of bullying intervention and effective prevention efforts. The extensive reach of the NEA membership provided the ideal opportunity to address some of these unanswered questions and, in turn, inform the types of supports and professional development provided to its members. This study explored factors such as perception of the school environment (e.g., connectedness), efficacy to handle bullying situations, and perceived prevalence and norms related to bullying. Of particular interest were potential differences in perceptions between Teachers and ESPs. A unique feature of this study is the large sample, which allows for contrasts among different member types, including Teachers and ESPs. Additionally, future research could contrast all ESP groups, such as school transportation staff, food service staff, paraeducators, etc., to better understand the specific needs of these school personnel. This national study of staff members' perceptions of bullying is the first of its kind, and represents an important step in enhancing our understanding of the perspectives of Teachers and ESPs.

Given the high rates of bullying in schools, it is not surprising that school staff expressed great concern about this issue. Large numbers of students are seeking help from Teachers as well as from ESPs. While ESPs appear to witness similar levels of bullying as Teachers, they have received less training on their district's bullying policy, are less likely to be involved in bullying intervention and prevention efforts at school, and are less likely to feel that it is "their job" to intervene. Yet, the findings from the current study indicate that ESPs are more likely than Teachers to live in the community served by the school. This suggests that ESPs may have strong connections to both the school and students, thereby making them a natural source of support for students in need. Moreover, given the fact that a significant portion of bullying occurs in areas such as the cafeteria, playground, and school busses, intervention and prevention programs should more actively include ESPs and other school staff who have the opportunity to supervise these areas. For all school personnel, including those who oversee high-risk areas for bullying, to feel invested in the intervention and prevention efforts it is essential to have a whole-school model in which ESPs are valued participants in planning and implementation. To date, there are few programs for bullying intervention and prevention designed to address the specific needs of ESPs. The results of the current study suggest that ESPs are an untapped resource in schools. Many appear eager to be involved in bullying intervention and prevention programs. As such, there should be increased training for ESPs

and more opportunities for them to become involved in intervention and prevention activities.

Consistent with previous studies of students (Robers, Zhang, and Truman, 2010), cyberbullying was one of the least common forms of bullying witnessed by staff; it was also viewed as less of a concern than verbal bullying. Yet, additional training related to cyberbulling and sexting was requested. Prior surveys administered by the NEA similarly suggested that sexting is an emerging concern among NEA members. It may also be advantageous to ensure that these issues are covered within district policies. The school's role in intervening when bullying occurs outside of the school setting (e.g., online, on a students' cell phone) should be clarified within the district policies and addressed through school-based bullying prevention activities. Research shows that school staff may not view certain forms of bullying (e.g., relational, cyberbullying) as warranting intervention or sympathy (e.g., Yoon and Kerber, 2003), thus inadvertently creating a situation where students may perceive specific aggressive behaviors as acceptable. It may be advantageous for school staff to receive training that increases their knowledge in these areas and helps them develop appropriate positive behavior strategies that can be used if a child is bullying others or being victimized. In addition, these sessions can help school staff recognize various forms of bullying (physical vs. relational).

Nearly all states have developed anti-bullying laws, many of which require training for school staff and the adoption of bullying intervention and prevention activities (Furlong, Morrison, and Grief, 2003; Limber and Small, 2003; Srabstein et al., 2008). The findings of the current study indicate that bullying policies exist in many districts, but there seems to be a lack of sufficient instruction on the implementation of those policies. Again, ESPs were less likely than Teachers to report that they had received training on the district policy. School staff also reported a great need for additional training to help them confidently intervene in bullying situations that involve special populations of students, such as GLBT youth, or particular forms of bullying, such as cyberbullying.

With less than 60 percent of staff members reporting that their school had formal bullying intervention and prevention efforts in place, there should be a greater emphasis on the implementation of evidence-based bullying intervention and prevention programs. Only 25 percent of ESPs reported involvement in bullying intervention and prevention teams, committees, and formal activities, but they reported similar levels of exposure to bullying as compared to Teachers. To date, there are few intervention and prevention programs for bullying designed to address the specific needs of ESPs.

The results of this study illustrate an important link between staff members' reports of connectedness to others in the school community and their comfort and willingness to intervene in bullying situations. These findings extend prior research on the importance of staff perceptions of the school environment (Bevans et al., 2007; Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993; Pas et al., 2010). For example, previous research indicates that teaching staff's perceptions of school climate are directly related to their beliefs concerning a school-wide prevention program, as well as the fidelity of program implementation (Beets et al., 2008). Furthermore, schools with administrators who encourage collaboration among staff members regarding school-wide decisions will likely do a better job implementing intervention and prevention efforts with high fidelity. Staff members' connectedness with each other has also been shown to influence implementation of anti-bullying programs (Kallestad and Olweus, 2003), and when teaching staff feels supported by

their peers and administrators they perceive the school climate more positively and are more likely to deliver prevention curricula (Gregory, Henry, Schoeny, and Metropolitan Area Study Research Group, 2007).

The current findings also highlight the link between staff members' efficacy in handling bullying situations and staff members' attitudes toward intervention. This finding complements similar research linking teaching staff efficacy to their beliefs about their ability to teach students, about effective teaching practices, and about student achievement (Bandura, 1977; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2007). Staff who experienced greater connectedness reported greater willingness to intervene in bullying situations. This suggests that both connectedness and efficacy are important potential targets for bullying intervention and prevention efforts. By enhancing connectedness and efficacy, staff members may also be more likely to become involved in bullying intervention and prevention. A recent study of School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports found that high-fidelity implementation of the model was associated with significant improvements in staff members' connectedness to others within the school (Bradshaw, Koth, Thornton, and Leaf, 2009). This suggests that Positive Behavior Supports may also have an impact on staff members' willingness to intervene and participate in prevention efforts as well as on students' bullying behavior (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, and Leaf, 2011).

Taken together, the findings of the NEA Bullying Study provide great insight into staff members' perceptions of bullying, including the unique perspectives of ESPs, who are often overlooked in the literature. To our knowledge, this study is the only large-scale nationwide study to examine different staff members' perspectives on bullying intervention and prevention. As such, this study helps to elucidate the specific needs of various groups of adults who work in schools across the country. These findings may also inform the creation of professional development and training materials tailored for different school staff, as well as for those working with special populations of students across different grade levels and community contexts.

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Appendix A

Table of Survey Constructs

Primary Survey Topic Areas	Number of Items (alpha)	Citation/Source
Demographic Information		
Staff Characteristics	5 items	*Written for this survey*
School Characteristics	9 items	*Written for this survey*
Perceptions of School	5 items (α = .76)	Adapted from Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS; National Center for Education Statistics, 2007)
Exposure to and Concerns about Bullying		
Perceptions of and Witnessing of Bullying	7 items	Johns Hopkins Bullying Prevention Survey (Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan, 2007)
Forms of Bullying and Bullying that Targets Special Populations		
Types and Forms of Bullying	5 core items (with 5 sub-items each)	Johns Hopkins Bullying Prevention Survey (Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan, 2007)
Bullying of Special Populations	5 core items (with 6 sub-items each)	(Harris Interactive and GLSEN, 2005)
Bullying Policy and Prevention Efforts		
Presence of Bullying Policy	4 items	*Written for this survey*
Involvement in Prevention Programming	1 item	*Written for this survey*
Effective Strategies	1 item	Johns Hopkins Bullying Prevention Survey (Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan, 2007)
School Connectedness		
Student-Staff Connectedness	4 items (α = .79)	The Charles F. Kettering Climate Scale (Johnson, Johnson, Kranch, and Zimmerman, 1999) Subscales: Respect; High Morale; Caring
Staff Personal Connectedness	8 items (α = .89)	The Charles F. Kettering Climate Scale (Johnson, Johnson, Kranch, and Zimmerman, 1999) Subscales: High Morale; Opportunity for Input; Caring
Staff-Staff Connectedness	5 items (α = .91)	The Charles F. Kettering Climate Scale (Johnson, Johnson, Kranch, and Zimmerman, 1999) Subscale: Opportunity for Input A few additional items were written for this survey
Staff-Administration Connectedness	4 items (α = .90)	Collegial Leadership subscale (Hoy and Feldman, 1987)
Total Connectedness	21 items (α = .95)	*Comprised of the 4 subscales listed above*
Training and Support Needs		
Additional Training Needs	12 items	*Written for this survey*

Appendix B

Sample Characteristics Reflecting NEA Population

Professionals (Teachers)

Classroom Teacher	85%
Special Educator	4
Remedial/ESL	2
Library/Specialist	2
Counselor/Social Worker	3
Other	4

Education Support Professionals (ESPs)

Paraprofessional	49%
Maintenance	14
Clerical	10
School Transportation	10
Food Service	7
Security	1
Health	2
Technical/Skilled Trades	2
Other	6

Gender

Women	80%
Men	20

Race/Ethnicity

White	89%
Black	5
Hispanic	4
Other	2

School Level

Elementary School	39%
Middle School	19
High School	27
Other	16

School Location

Urban	24%
Suburban	34
Small Town	24
Rural	18

Table 1. Percentage of Staff Perceiving Bullying as a Problem

	Not a problem	Minor problem	Moderate problem	Major problem	Total
All	10%	47%	35%	8%	100%
By Member Type					
ESP	16%	46%	29%	9%	100%
Professional/Teacher	8	47	36	8	100
By Community					
Urban	9%	37%	39%	15%	100%
Suburban	10	51	34	5	100
Small Town/Rural	10	50	33	7	100
By School Level					
Elementary	15%	46%	32%	7%	100%
Middle	3	37	44	15	100
High	6	54	34	6	100
Other	11	50	31	8	100

Table 2. Percentage of Staff Who Witnessed Bullying During the Past Month

	Not at all	1x month	2-3 x month	Once a week	Several times/ week	Daily	Total
All	13%	25%	21%	16%	15%	9%	100%
By Member Type							
ESP	19%	28%	18%	12%	15%	9%	100%
Professional/Teacher	11	25	22	17	16	9	100
By Community							
Urban	9%	23%	16%	17%	20%	15%	100%
Suburban	14	27	21	18	14	6	100
Small Town/Rural	13	26	24	15	15	9	100
By School Level							
Elementary	13%	26%	20%	16%	17%	9%	100%
Middle	8	19	21	18	22	12	100
High	14	28	23	16	11	8	100
Other	13	28	19	17	13	10	100

Table 3. Percentage of Staff Who Perceived It Is Their Job to Intervene

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree Smwht	Agree Smwht	Agree Strongly	Total
All	1%	1%	9%	89%	100%
By Member Type					
ESP	5%	4%	16%	75%	100%
Professional/Teacher	0	1	8	91	100
By Community					
Urban	1%	1%	10%	88%	100%
Suburban	1	1	11	87	100
Small Town/Rural	1	1	7	91	100
By School Level					
Elementary	1%	1%	9%	90%	100%
Middle	1	1	10	89	100
High	1	3	10	86	100
Other	1	1	7	91	100

Table 4. Does Your School Have Formal Bullying Prevention Efforts?

	No	Yes	Total
All	42%	58%	100%
By Member Type			
ESP	35%	65%	100%
Professional/Teacher	43	57	100
By Community			
Urban	47%	53%	100%
Suburban	37	63	100
Small Town/Rural	43	57	100
By School Level			
Elementary	38%	62%	100%
Middle	39	61	100
High	51	49	100
Other	38	62	100

Table 5. Are You Involved in Bullying Prevention Efforts at Your School?

	No	Yes	Total
All	61%	39%	100%
By Member Type			
ESP	73%	27%	100%
Professional/Teacher	58	42	100
By Community			
Urban	57%	43%	100%
Suburban	63	37	100
Small Town/Rural	61	39	100
By School Level			
Elementary	56%	44%	100%
Middle	57	43	100
High	76	24	100
Other	58	42	100

Table 6. Does Your District Have a Bullying Prevention Policy?

	No	Yes	Total
All	7%	93%	100%
By Member Type			
ESP	4%	96%	100%
Professional/Teacher	8	92	100
By Community			
Urban	12%	88%	100%
Suburban	6	94	100
Small Town/Rural	7	93	100
By School Level			
Elementary	9%	91%	100%
Middle	5	95	100
High	8	92	100
Other	4	96	100

Table 7. Have You Received Training on the Implementation of the Bullying Policy?

	No	Yes	Total
All	46%	54%	100%
By Member Type			
ESP	54%	46%	100%
Professional/Teacher	45	55	100
By Community			
Urban	51%	49%	100%
Suburban	46	54	100
Small Town/Rural	44	56	100
By School Level			
Elementary	44%	56%	100%
Middle	44	56	100
High	52	48	100
Other	44	56	100

About the Authors

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