

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

For School Counselors: A Workshop Training on Bullying-Prevention for K-5 Students  
with Disabilities

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Masters of Science in Counseling,

Marriage and Family Therapy

By

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May 2012

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis project to my beautiful and loving family, the ones who have seen me rise despite adversity. Gracias abuelitos, Francisco y Belen De Robles por quererme inmensamente. To my esteemed parents who immigrated to the United States in hopes of a better future for themselves and their future children. I thank you for instilling passion in me to pursue higher education. Your hard work and inspiring words forever marked my perspective of life and encouraged my optimism to strive. Your emphasis on humility and having compassion for others taught me the importance of remaining true to myself, while seeking the pathway towards opportunity. Without your unconditional love and support, my life would not have played out the way it has.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis project to those who have taught me to live life while bringing me down and back up; you have helped me grow into the person I was intended to be. To the wonderful children, my special kids, the ones I've had a pleasure to work with, you all have taught me so much about loving all and seeing past mental and physical impairments. You have taught me that it is one's character that matters. It is for you that I have worked diligently to complete this thesis project. I have focused on carrying out my vision of fostering a safe space for all students who day by day are being marginalized and victimized for being seen as different. I believe in change, I see change, and I will bring change. Today, my life is full of meaning and that's because I have had the privilege of working with numerous individuals who have taught, guided, inspired, motivated, believed, and helped me develop into who I am. To this end, I am especially thankful for having been blessed with many opportunities that have helped mold my character. Rafael and Alejandro, this is for YOU, I love you!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am heartily thankful to my thesis chair, Dr. Tovah Sands and readers, Dr. Timmy Lee, and Erika Lopez who I have had the pleasure to learn from through my journey in the Educational Psychology and Counseling department. It is an honor to have you all as my thesis committee.

It is my pleasure to thank those who have made this thesis project possible, the wonderful children I've worked with and their families for trusting me to help bring a positive change to their children's life.

I would like to show my gratitude to all of my friends, colleagues, and the wonderful group of individuals who shared gracious moments with me as we journeyed together a field that only selfless, caring, empathetic, and loving individuals seek to pursue. Together we formed a cohort unlike anything I could have ever imagined. Melvin Barrientos, you were there for me through my toughest times. Thank you bro! Monica Zaghi, love ya! Ernesto, Jackie, Mel, Carmen, Shireen, I missed you. Tina, we did it!

I am indebted to the amazing supervisors I have had the pleasure to work with. Lorena Roman, Janka Werkman, and Tyler Fitzgerald who gave me the opportunity to explore, practice, and learn the skill of counseling, which could only come through experience. I am appreciative of everything you've taught me, for the opportunities you have all given me, and the doors you've continued to open.

Lastly, this thesis project would not have been possible without the support, motivation, encouragement, faith, and prayer of those dearest to my heart. To all of my friends, thank you for being unconditional support systems. Belen and Rocky always pursue your goals and continue making mom & dad proud. I <3 you all, Thank You!

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## ABSTRACT

For School Counselors: A Workshop Training on Bullying-Prevention for K-5 Students  
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The purpose of this graduate thesis project is to create a disability awareness curriculum for school counselors to promote and school personnel (teachers) to utilize and implement with elementary school students in order to help mitigate bullying through inclusion. This is aimed to educate students of all races, gender, ethnicity, learning ability, and disability. A disabilities curriculum will create awareness, acceptance, and inclusion and decrease bullying in the school setting. The goal is for school counselors to provide school administrators and personnel (teachers) with an introductory instructional presentation of the goals and vision for the staff. The staff will be responsible for executing it by educating students about being accepting of individual differences. Simultaneously, staff will emphasize the importance of treating others with respect and dignity despite mental and physical impairments while providing students with information and activities. This will help reduce rejection and create awareness as well as acceptance among students especially of those with disabilities. Bullying today has become one of the most pervasive problems in society putting those most vulnerable at risk. This proposed curriculum will reduce exclusion and marginalization of individuals who are bullied because of a disability.

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

*Introduction*

Removing stigmas about disabilities creates positive school experiences for students with disabilities. Legislation has helped increase the educational opportunity of students with disabilities in the school setting by mandating adequate educational services for them (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 helps increase academic expectations by encouraging the closing of the gap between general education and special education curriculums (Department of Education, 2002). The nationwide emphasis on the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom has called for more acceptance and preparation by school personnel. It is shown that close friendships are imperative throughout the development of children and therefore classroom involvement plays an integral part in a student's experience in the school setting. As cited in Estell, D. et.al 2009, high quality friendships are associated with positive attitudes, which can reduce the likelihood of students being victimized (bullied) by peers (Fox & Boulton, 2006; Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996). It has also been noted that students who do not have a sense of belonging are exposed to the risk of loneliness, peer rejection, isolation, and also powerlessness (Williams & Downing, 1998). A bullying prevention curriculum aimed at encouraging personnel, staff, and students to participate in the positive socialization of children with

disabilities is a responsible way to achieve adequate inclusion and build support across the school setting.

### *Significance of the Problem*

This graduate thesis project demonstrates that there is a growing concern for awareness and preparation of school administration and personnel on issues affecting children with disabilities, specifically bullying. School counselors as the advocates of safe school environments can contribute to this awareness by advocating for the equal treatment of all students through a curriculum that focuses on promoting acceptance of others while fostering a safe space that shapes students with integrity. The lack of a streamlined guideline or procedure by which to achieve the inclusion of children with disabilities aside from existing mainstreaming approaches implies a need for improvement. The limited knowledge and preparation by school administration and personnel has added to the inadequate treatment and poor acceptance of students with a disability in the school setting since it has excluded and deprived them of equal educational opportunities and therefore left some vulnerable to bullying among their peers (Milson, 2006). Peer acceptance of students with a disability by general education students is imperative to the development of those affected. For these reasons it is vital that schools adopt school-wide curriculums that provide education about disabilities in order to prevent and help mitigate bullying. This curriculum will stress that all individuals are different but not less and will promote a bully free school environment.

### *Purpose of Graduate Project*

The purpose of the current thesis project is to create a bullying prevention workshop that school counselors can utilize to increase the general school peer



population's awareness and acceptance of individuals with a disability within the school. It is believed that the implementation of a school-wide curriculum that encourages awareness about disabilities will allow school counselors the opportunity to work collaboratively with school administration and personnel (teachers) to collectively help dispel the bullying of students with disabilities by their general education peers. The goal of the project is to provide school counselors with the necessary tools including information and training. Through these methods they will provide children with disabilities the necessary assistance and services needed in order to be fully included, accepted, and respected to create a positive school experience. Likewise, similar methods focused on general education students will be implemented for them to understand and contribute to the goals of the curriculum.

This curriculum is an essential tool for schools as it can positively impact the lives of all students who participate in it. It creates equal educational opportunities and helps students become aware of the concept of disabilities as well as learn to accept, recognize and support their fellow peers and acknowledge that individual differences does not equate to being less. The PowerPoint being presented to school counselors is intended to make school counselors aware of the significance and need for this curriculum. It will present them with the purpose, desired outcome, and the funding tools necessary to implement this curriculum at their schools. By taking the lead to implement this curriculum, school counselors will take the first step to create a school environment that is accepting of all students, regardless of disabilities.

Literature has shown that bullying is a nationwide problem since the harassment of youth with disabilities continues to increase (Hoover & Stenhjem, 2003). From

bullying prevention programs we learn that maintaining an informed and trained staff is significant to addressing problems. In this capacity school counselors will conduct a workshop that incorporates staff including principals to move the curriculum forward. A one-day 6.5 hour workshop will be structured to motivate and highlight the vision of the curriculum while emphasizing the significance of educating others about some of the disabilities that exist and why it is important to be accepting of others despite individual differences. Techniques/ interventions for school counselors to use through bullying prevention programs will be presented to help foster a safe and welcoming school environment comprised of students with integrity. The goal of this curriculum is to provide school counselors with helpful techniques that will create an opportunity for equal education of all students. In addition, this project is committed to highlighting the positive school environments that may develop through the use of the curriculum and how it may help create positive peer interactions among all students with and without a disability. The audience of the Academic Counselors Conducting Educational Preparedness Techniques to Incorporate a Nexus for Guiding Students to Accept, Recognize and support Special Students, *A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S.* curriculum is elementary School Counselors interested in working with elementary students. This intended curriculum is flexible and adaptable and focuses on gathering support from school personnel, specifically school counselors, to take on a leadership role to support fit goals of the school and to target the intended professional staff population and ultimately the experience of children with disabilities. The curriculum is geared towards professional school counselors who are empathetic, credentialed, master's degree recipients, ethical and follow legal guidelines, are members of a professional organization

and are experienced in working with elementary school students and have experience implementing programs within schools. This curriculum is intended to be a collaborative curriculum that allows school counselors, administrators, and others in the school setting to imagine exciting possibilities of change through the educational achievement of all members. Collaboration is essential to the projected success of bullying prevention and increased disability awareness. School counselors will take on the role of the mediator and will ensure that the program is being appropriately implemented to safeguard children.

### *Terminology*

1. Disabilities: lack of physical or mental ability (dictionary.com, 2012).
2. Marginalize (ation): at the outer or lower limits; almost insufficient (dictionary.com, 2012).
3. Exclusion: Refers to leaving out of a situation/group or environment.
4. Inclusion: Being accepting, or there being acceptance.
5. Inclusive Setting: that includes; enclosing; embracing (dictionary.com, 2012) setting.
6. Individual Differences: Unique characteristics of behavior of a person.
7. Bullying: Refers to the unfair treatment and exerted power used to target individuals perceived as weaker.
8. Autism Disorder: A developmental disorder characterized by impaired communication, excessive rigidity, and emotional detachment (dictionary.com, 2012).

9. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Persistent pattern of inattention and/ or hyperactivity-impulsivity, DSM-IV-TR (2000) 4<sup>th</sup> ed.
10. Hard of Hearing/Deafness: Refers to the inability to experience sounds and understand verbalizations.
11. Special Need: the special educational requirement for those with learning difficulties, emotional or behavioral problems, or physical disabilities (dictionary.com, 2012)
12. Special Education : education that is modified or particularized for those having singular needs or disabilities (dictionary.com, 2012)

Chapter Two will review pertinent literature that supports the need for disability awareness curriculum in the school setting to. Disability awareness curriculums can help dissipate negative stereotypes, rejection, and bullying, while also help promote the fair treatment of everyone (inclusion) and a safe school environment. Chapter Three addresses the project development, the intended audience, personal qualifications, environment and equipment, limitations of the project and the project outline. In Chapter Four, a summary of the curriculum will be addressed.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### *Introduction*

Growing incidence of bullying and awareness of disabilities, calls for concern and greater social awareness. The need for the social integration of students with disabilities within the confines of spatial settings like the school, calls for the need to focus on making every student's learning experience equal. School faculty and peers can affect the school experience of students with a disability positively or negatively. School counselors, administrators, and teachers can help increase awareness and create more positive school experiences for students with disabilities (Milsom, 2006). School counselors as advocates for their students can be the agents of change by working with school personnel to promote the acceptance of students with disabilities. They can achieve this by teaching all students about individual differences (disabilities) in order for students to understand what a disability is and how they can make a difference in a student with a disability's experience. By creating greater awareness, general education students will understand and will want to form friendships and be a supporting and caring peer group. In doing so, students with a disability will become an integral population in the school setting. This literature review will look at some of the disabilities represented within schools and focus on supporting the idea of creating awareness, recognition, acceptance, and support for victimized and bullied students, specifically those with disabilities. This literature review will look at Autism and some other disabilities and highlight the importance of awareness to increase acceptance and inclusion in the schools (Levy, Mandell, Schultz, 2009).

## *Children (K-5)*

### *Normal Childhood Development*

Early development is the first step that marks the biological, cognitive and social changes in a human's life. As children develop their growing autonomy in the school, they also learn about life outside of the family. According to Erik Erikson's stages of development, the elementary aged student experiences two of those stages. During the "initiative vs. guilt stage" (3-6) children want to take on adult like activities while disobeying rules set by the parents and experiencing a sense of guilt. The children at this stage develop a sense of purpose and define themselves according to physical activities they engage in and their accomplishments. They develop thinking skills, which further evolve as they enter later stages of development. The "industry vs. inferiority stage" (6-11) encompasses the experience where the child learns to be competent and productive or may experience feelings of inferiority and see their self as being unable to do things well. During this stage, the child engages in social comparison with their peers and develops a sense of industry when outcomes of their comparison are favorable to them. The school years expose the children to develop a sense of industry, which helps them learn to be cooperative with others and to have interactions with peers. Formal schooling allows children to learn about social roles, their competencies as well as performance. It is important to understand that while children are exposed to individuals outside of their family they are developing their self-esteem and individuality. During this time they also find themselves comparing their self to their peers (Eccles, 1999). Having an understanding of the normal development of children as they enter the school age helps us understand the significance that the early stages of development play in a child's life. This highlights the importance that peer and social acceptance plays in the childhood

experience as they are developing and learning about their competencies, comparing themselves to their peers and feel a sense of confidence in their peer relations.

### *Disabilities*

A disability is a term that encompasses a wide variety of mental and physical disorders, which may be severe or chronic (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004). Individuals with disabilities have difficulty in distinct areas of their daily life experience. More often than not, they are life long, and pose a great impact on the children affected by it (Boyle, Decoufle, & Yeargin-Allsopp, 1994). Boyle et al. (1994) suggested that developmental disabilities are prevalent in the United States with a ratio of 1 in every 6 children ages  $\leq 17$ . Overwhelming increases in the rate of children with a disability calls for educational awareness to raise acceptance of students with a special need.

### *Children with Disabilities*

Children with disabilities are individuals who like non-disabled children, experience and develop their growing autonomy in the school. The development of the child with a disability is imperative to their life experiences. Unfortunately, the school experience for these children is affected by the negative feelings exerted by their non-disabled peers. Westervelt and Turnbull (1980) suggested that an environment that holds negative feelings, contributes to the isolation of the child with a disability. This isolation creates a lesser opportunity for the child to develop a healthy sense of self and psychological wellbeing. As such, it is important to address school policy in efforts to understand the role the school plays in targeting the problem of unsafe and un-equal learning experiences. The Los Angeles Unified School District 2011-2012 Parent Student

handbook has a nondiscrimination statement, which denotes that LAUSD is “committed to providing a working and learning environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment.” The District prohibits discrimination based on an individual’s disability. LAUSD defines disability as a mental or physical characteristic. Recognition of such is imperative and an important factor to use in efforts of helping children with disabilities thrive and develop a healthy self and psychological wellbeing. Milsom (2006) reported in Nowicki and Sandieson’s 1999 to 2000 study about attitudes towards children with disabilities concluded that children without disabilities regularly prefer interacting with peers without a disability. Students who had a friend or classmate with a disability were more accepting of them (McDougall, Dewit, King, Miller, and Killip, 2004).The opportunity to promote social interactions among all students at school is therefore positive. For this purpose some disabilities will be briefly explored, such as:

- Autism Disorder
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Hard of Hearing/Deafness

#### *Autism Disorder*

Autism Spectrum Disorder is one of many developmental disabilities that have overwhelmingly increased worldwide. Autism was once considered a rare developmental disability, and now is identified as the most common disorder affecting many children (Autism Society Canada, 2005). The prevalence of Autism is increasing rapidly, it is only one of many disabilities. Levy, et al.(2009) found that the estimated prevalence of autistic disorder is between 10 and 20 per 10,000 children. A high rate of individuals with autism and pervasive developmental disorders creates a need for legislations to act on promoting



the inclusion of disabled children by including and mainstreaming them into regular classes (Yianni-Coudurier et al., 2008). Autism can be diagnosed as early as 3 years of age. Early detection of the disorder is imperative to the child's success in life. Early intervention programs increase the likelihood of the child gaining coping skills that will allow them to live a life closer to the normal continuum. Creating integration of students with disabilities with general education students allows for a positive impact in the social development of individuals with autism. If there is no opportunity to learn with their general education peers social skill acquisition will not be possible (Leach, & Duffy, 2009) and children will not have equal opportunities to develop social skill acquisition. Autism is only one of many disabilities. In addition to Autism, Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder prevails in the school settings.

#### *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*

The American Psychiatric Association (1994) notes that attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder is considered a common impairing behavior disorder which is diagnosed in 3-5% of school-age children. Some of the existing behaviors that occur in conjunction with a disorder of ADHD include oppositional defiant behaviors towards adults; conduct problems as well as academic problems that lead the child to fail academically. As aforementioned, students with ADHD encounter several difficulties, which in turn have been said to affect the child with school performance leaving one to wonder how students interact with their peers. Extensive research has not been performed on the peer views of children with ADHD, though the few studies available indicate that peers do not see children with ADHD as desirable peers or companions. In a study, Pelham and Bender (1982) describe that children with ADHD were rated as less

desirable companions in play activities than children without ADHD after only two play interactions with ADHD children. Such findings continue to support the idea that children who have a disability are being discriminated by and rejected by their peers.

### *Hard of Hearing/Deafness*

Hearing as one of the five senses gives one the ability to experience sounds and to understand verbalizations made by others as a form of communication. Hearing loss is not only experienced by older adults, some children also experience it. Language and communication skills begin to develop during childhood and children who experience hearing impairment at an early age need attention. As described in a 2010 publication by the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY), generally only children whose hearing loss is greater than 90 decibels (dB) are considered deaf. IDEA in NICHCY 2010 defines hearing impairment as “impairment in hearing whether permanent or fluctuating that adversely affects a child’s educational performance” (p.5). In turn, deafness is defined as, “a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification.” Children with such impairments will experience more difficulties in learning the skills necessary for their communication, and they will receive assistance within the public school system. Although there isn’t extensive research on the effects of teasing children who are hard of hearing or deaf, Kent (2003) & Sheridan (2001) discuss that there is evidence to support that these children have also experienced being teased by their non-deaf peers at school. Such findings continue to support the idea that students with disabilities regardless of what disability they have can be victims of bullying.

Knowledge about disabilities will allow for an increased understanding of individual differences. In addition, although the literature review does not extensively explore various disabilities affecting school-aged children, the research mentioned suggests that students with a disability are being treated differently than their non-disabled peers. The need to implement effective programs and curriculums that support the notion of minimizing exclusion and maximizing inclusion through peer acceptance supports a curriculum that will achieve greater awareness about developmental disabilities in the school setting

### *Bullying*

There is growing concern about negative and detrimental outcomes of bullying which calls for a plan of action in the school setting. Known as victimization, Besag, (1989) and Olweus (1991) address bullying as a form of aggression in which there is an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim, which takes place amongst peers. Bullying not only has lasting effects on the victims, it also affects the perpetrators themselves. Both groups are at risk of social, emotional and psychiatric problems in their later years as found in the body of research (Craig, 1998; Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Puura, 2001; Nansel et al., 2001; Prinstein, Boergers, & Vernberg, 2001). Children who are or who have been victims of bullying are individuals who deserve a safe and welcoming environment at their schools. Victimization of children only serves to isolate those who are perceived as small, physically and socially marginalized from what is socially acceptable (Flynt, S.W, Morton, R.C., 2007) and as weak, and vulnerable. These students lack friendships and also experience rejection from their peers.

Bullying is considered the most common form of violence. Cohn and Cantor (2003) discuss the prevalence, and characteristics of the bullying phenomenon. As the most common form of violence it is known that 3.7 million youth engage in bullying and 3.2 million are the victims of bullying on a yearly basis. The facts are that:

- There have been 250 violent deaths in schools due to bullying since 1992.
- Physical bullying increases during the elementary level, increases in middle school, yet declines at the high school level. However, verbal abuse continues.
- More than two-thirds of students consider that schools respond poorly to bullying.
- Students believe that they receive no help or support from adults at the school.
- Twenty- five percent of the times teachers do not see anything wrong with bullying or putdowns; they only intervene four percent of the time.

Cohn and Cantor (2003).

Such findings help us understand about the significance that bullying plays at the school level. It also teaches us that millions of students are part of this cycle of bullying violence.

### *Bullying of Children with Disabilities*

Hoover and Stenhjem (2003) explained that bullying can include harassing someone due to perceived differences, such as, a disability. This population is considered to be the most vulnerable to bullying and harassment within the schools as it continues to increase (Hoover and Stenhjem, 2003). According to research done by Olweus (1993) in Hoover and Stenhjem, 2003, only physical weakness appeared to be a consistent predictor of victimization of bullying. Separation and labeling of students within the school is based on athletic or academic abilities (Bowman, 2001; Hoover & Salk, 2003 in

Hoover and Stenhjem, 2003). This separation and labeling creates an opportunity for teasing, harassment, and bullying as students with a disability oftentimes are not participants of such programs. Is this how our school children should live while they are at school?

Inclusive settings do not guarantee a full inclusion and acceptance of children who have disabilities in the general education classes. Guralnick et al. (1995) in Monchy et al., (2004) supports the idea that research has shown that an inclusive setting does not lead to an automatic acceptance of students with a disability, since students without disabilities prefer to engage interactively with peers without a disability. Isolation of students who have a disability puts them at greater risk of not forming friendships, feeling lonely, vulnerable as well as more susceptible to being the victims of bullies. Monchy et al., (2004) found that students with disabilities, who are part of a general education class, were less included by peers and experienced greater frequency of being bullied. It was noted that although teachers implemented curriculum aimed at promoting inclusion within the classroom, they underestimated the frequency of bullying happening among their students. Brendtro (2001) suggests that peer victimization of students with disabilities is one of today's most overlooked educational concerns. Although efforts of inclusion have been established, the need for promoting awareness about disabilities still exists. All students deserve to thrive in their educational environments despite individual differences among peers. Bullying is of major concern, calls for attention and needs to be addressed for the improvement of interactions and peer-acceptance at schools. Hoover and Stenhjem (2003) discuss that bullying is one of the most common forms of violence consisting of violent deaths (i.e. school shootings) physical bullying at the elementary

level that has continued to increase in recent years. During present time, bullying continues to exist at schools and needs to be addressed. It is my belief that school counselors can continue to be positive and influential mediators leading schools to a path of success by paving the way with a vision of acceptance, recognition, and support for students with disabilities.

### *Bullying Prevention Programs*

Given that children who engage in bullying tend to target those students who are perceived as smaller, and weaker, Flynt & Mornton (2007) suggest that students with disabilities, who physically and socially are different from what is considered the norm, run a greater risk of being bullied. This problem has to be addressed to create a caring school environment. The U.S. Department of Education (2000) cited in Hoover & Stenhjem (2003) states that schools should opt to develop and implement procedures that prohibit any discrimination focused on disabilities, which create harassment. Intervention programs that aim to reduce or eliminate existing bullying at the schools serve an important role within the school setting. Students need guidance in knowing what an appropriate interaction with peers is, and become leaders in their schools by opting out of treating others unjustly.

The Olweus *Bullying Prevention Program* is one of the most widely used multilevel programs. It includes school-wide components such as assessment, coordination, classroom components that relate to class rules, and individual components that are aimed for the bullies, and victims (Collins & Flynt, 2007). Dan Olweus is recognized as a leading researcher in the issue of bullying and victimization taking place in the school setting. He has conducted extensive research on the topic for various years.

His intervention program is aimed at reducing and eliminating existing bully and victim problems that arise within and outside of the school while also using preventative measures for future bullying problems (Hoover & Stenhjem, 2003). According to *Olweu's Core Program*, there are three measures to follow. The first step consists of *measures at the school level* which include, focusing on targeting the entire school population, surveying all students regarding bullying, conducting a school conference on bullying, having better supervision of students during their breaks at school, and parent and staff cooperation at resolving problems. It also involves having *measures at the class level* that target all students within the classroom. Students help develop class rules against bullying, rules are consistently enforced, and students hold meetings about bullying. In addition, the program also involves a third measure, a *measure at the individual level* targeting students that are known to be or are suspected of being the bullies or the victims of bullies. This measure entails having serious talks with bullies and victims, serious talks with the parents of students involved, as well as using creative solutions to resolve the issue (Hoover & Stenhjem, 2003). It is believed that Olweus's Core program can be an effective tool guide for school counselors to use for the purposes of this Academic Counselors Conducting Educational Preparedness Techniques to Incorporate a Nexus for Guiding Students to Accept, Recognize and Support Special Students (*A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S*) thesis project, curriculum. This core program is structured in such a way that allows all members within school confines to take part in implementing change at school while focusing on creating awareness and reducing/eliminating bullying at the schools.

A case study, the *School Culture Benchmarks: Bridges and Barriers to Successful Bullying Prevention Program Implementation* by H. Elizabeth Coyle 2008, indicates that there is good enough research to suggest that bullying prevention programs are successful in school environments that have a positive school culture. Kasen, Berenson, Cohen, and Johnson (2004) in Coyle, 2008 suggested that while investigating the effects of school environment on changes in bullying-related behaviors, schools that were well organized, harmonious and prioritized learning were factors that served to prevent bullying and victimization. It is important to acknowledge that the effectiveness of a bullying prevention program such as the Olweus Core program is determined by the school culture. As defined by Donahoe, 1997 in Coyle, 2008, school culture is defined as, the values, beliefs, behaviors, rules, products, signs, and the symbols of a school. Such definition is important since it encompasses the contributing factors to the success or failure of bullying prevention programs. School environments that have a positive school culture allow for the success of bullying prevention programs. It is intended that school administration and staff collaborating with the school counselor who is promoting the *A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S.* curriculum will be mindful of the school's culture and continue promoting a positive one for the effectiveness of this curriculum. Collaboration between everyone participating in this curriculum will be an essential key factor. It is intended that students who are taught this curriculum will be students who will one day continue promoting a sense of community and belonging where school counselors, school administration, personnel, and students all have a connection that promotes the reduction/elimination of school violence and exclusion.



Another strategy that can be used at the schools in school counseling programs are the following interventions which school counselors can use to foster self-advocacy and competence and the empowerment of “minority” students, those with disabilities, in order for them to take active roles in their education. Astramovich & Harris, (2007) highlighted that in order to help minority group students (students with disabilities) the use of awareness building, knowledge building, and skill building strategies are important components that can help develop the self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-confidence of the minority student. The *awareness-building strategies* focus on helping the minority student develop awareness necessary for self-advocacy by having the school counselor use self-reflective and experiential activities at the individual and group level. At the elementary level it is suggested that school counselors use narrative activities and multicultural children literature in large and small group lessons for children to learn about their own cultural backgrounds as well as that of others (Singer & Smith, 2003). At the secondary level it is believed that students may benefit from sharing cultural autobiographies, which may help students explore their cultural backgrounds and experiences. In addition, it is proposed that secondary students network with other minority peers. It is also believed that school wide culture-centered programs and celebrations can help increase awareness and appreciation of self-cultural heritage as well as that of others (Harris & Astamovich, 2007).

Additionally, the second intervention addressed in Harris & Astamovich, 2007 is the *knowledge-building strategies* which focuses on the school counselor assisting minority students increase their self-advocacy through guidance presentations as well as activities aimed at aiding students to recognize prejudicial as well as discriminatory

practices which create consequences on individuals, groups, and society. In secondary settings it is discussed that school counselors may help with promoting self-advocacy by reading the experiences of other minorities who have dealt with prejudice and oppression and to learn effective ways of promoting social justice in the educational system as well as in society.

The third intervention is *skill-building strategies*. This focuses on school counselors helping minority students develop specific skills to become effective self-advocates, by helping students at the elementary level develop assertiveness, negotiation, and mediation skills. The strategy proposes that this can be done through a small group or large group guidance lesson. It is also discussed that school counselors can help minority students be matched with mentors to help them cope with challenges at their school. The explored strategies are informative tools which serve a great purpose in delineating efforts that have been created to help with reducing and eliminating bullying within school by promoting acceptance of others through learning about individual differences with purpose of creating peer acceptance.

#### *Peer Acceptance*

Haring, 1991 posited that peer acceptance is an important aspect of the schooling experience and contributes to the quality of life of students with disabilities. He emphasized that all individuals have strengths and weaknesses and peer acceptance is a safe way to normalize individual differences. This concept allows students to accept themselves for who they are meanwhile it helps them become more self-aware. Although individuals look or act differently, they may be different but not less. As addressed in Katz & Mirenda (2002), all people possess strengths and weaknesses, can teach and learn,

as well as have value which in turn may increase student's acceptance of their own abilities and difficulties, making them more aware and accepting of others. Salend and Duhaney (1999) have suggested that inclusive settings have positive and negative outcomes. They note that other studies have demonstrated that there are temporary social improvements made within inclusive classrooms in regards to the interactions between students with disabilities and without. This is due to the negative stereotypical views that students without disabilities hold of their peers. Frederickson and Furnham (2004) found that general education peers rejected students with Learning Disabilities during play and school activities regardless if these students were in an inclusive setting. Such outcomes support the need for immediate action; inclusive settings alone are not creating the most accepting environment for all students.

Chang's (2004) study suggests that the relation between peer acceptance and a behavior differs as a function of the group norm of the behavior or of the extent to which group members engage in the behavior. If students do not have an understanding of their peers, of individual differences such as a developmental disability, students are not able to relate to them and therefore are not accepting of peers that do not fit the group norm. Lei Chang described Harris's (1995) words "Children's peer groups operate by a 'majority rules' rule: If one or two individuals come to the group with behaviors that do not conform to the norms of the majority, they risk rejection by the group" (Qtd. in Chang 692). Therefore increased support for programs that raise awareness about disabilities are needed among students who risk being rejected because they do not meet the group norm. Strategies for enhancing inclusion are therefore adequate to improve peer acceptance.

It is important to consider that in addition to the need for acceptance among students with disabilities by their general education peers, there are also other factors and outcomes that benefit these students. Katz & Mirenda, 2002 emphasized that the opportunity that students with disabilities have to interact and learn from their peers without disabilities has shown a positive correlation with measures of self-esteem, social skills, positive behavioral outcomes as well as excel academically. In turn it is important to acknowledge that inclusive settings (i.e. classrooms, schools) may help students with disabilities interact with their general education peers because they provide students the opportunity to interact in least restrictive environments not only in the classroom but in other settings where they may develop friendships like recess and lunch time (Katz, J. & Mirenda, P., 2002). Actively advocating for the inclusion and peer acceptance of students with disabilities by encouraging general education peers to remember a time when they faced rejection from others, is one of many steps to achieve empathy and peer acceptance and create the equal environment students with disabilities and parents' desire for their children (Gus, 2000). All students deserve quality of life. Simeonsson et al., 2001 suggest that researchers have emphasized the need for studies that focus on identifying the dimensions within school environments, which can enhance the health, well being, and the valued membership in society of students with disabilities. Such need calls for the enrichment of the quality of life that all students with disabilities are currently experiencing. Collaboration of school administrators and school personnel alike to improve the experience of children with disabilities and reduce opportunities to bully is imperative

## *Professional School Counselor*

### *School Counselor*

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2009) through leadership, advocacy and collaboration, school counselors exercise their qualifying master's degree, state certification and licensure standards. School Counselors are qualified to attend to the developmental needs of their students by using their competencies in academic, career, personal and social development of all students. Professional school counselors are employed in elementary, middle, and high school settings and help their students by upholding ethical and professional standards of ASCA as well as other professional counseling associations. They create a mission statement that supports the mission of the school and collaborate with individuals and organizations to promote the well being of their student academically, career, and personal/social development.

The role of the school counselor is based on fostering culturally competent services to their students. School counselor's focus is on providing school guidance curriculum, which focuses on lesson plans aimed at helping their students learn necessary skills for their development. They also help students with individual planning, are responsible for responsive services which encompass prevention programs which help address current and future student needs, as well as being involved in system support. They also focus on collaborating with others and managing and maintaining the school counseling program within the school (ASCA, 2009). In addition, school counselors are responsible for managing that there is a clear communication between the school administration and the school counselor to guide and implement the necessary

curriculum to fit the needs of the school. Similarly, they are responsible for their accountability while using data to measure the effectiveness of program being implemented at the school, and to make adjustments if necessary (ASCA, 2009).

Adequate training and involvement in the services provided to students with disabilities in a school setting is essential to improve student integration. School counselors can serve as advocates for student success at all levels. The role of the school counselor should be based on fostering culturally competent services to their students. This means that services provided are given in relation to an understanding of students. School counselor's current focus on implementing school guidance curriculum focus on lesson plans aimed at helping their students learn necessary skills for their development. They also help students with individual planning and are accountable for responsive services that encompass prevention programs to help address current and future student needs. Building a support system and also focusing on collaborating with others and managing and maintaining the school counseling program within the school are additional services provided by counselors (ASCA, 2009). In addition, school counselors are responsible for managing clear communication between school administration and the school counselor to guide and implement the necessary curriculum to fit the needs of the school. Similarly, they are responsible for their accountability while using data to measure the effectiveness of program being implemented at the school, and to make adjustments if necessary (ASCA, 2009). School counselors have the capacity to work with students of ability or disability. Although they need to start focusing on providing equal services to students with disabilities by becoming involved in learning more about existing disabilities and gaining knowledge about how to better serve this population.

Implementing programs at schools, formulating ideas, projects and creating awareness at the school setting could potentially create a safe and welcoming environment for all students. Creating a clear notion of the importance inclusion has on students at all levels could help transform schools from being negative to a positive environment for students with a disability. In a study by Myers (2005), it was found that school counselors were influenced by the ASCA national model and were collaborating with school staff to help students with disabilities meet their personal and social needs. It is important for school counselors to work collaboratively with school administration and staff to adopt a school-wide programs aimed at integrating a nexus to guide students to accept, recognize and support students with disabilities. School counselors can serve as mediators in relaying their source of information to school personnel (teachers) who will implement services for students at schools.

Within the scope of their practice, school counselors, as advocates, can act on behalf of their students to help them get an education in the least restrictive environment. School counselors have been criticized for failing to challenge the oppressive environments of school settings, which segregate students (Bailey, Getch, & Chen-Hayes, 2003 in Agramovich & Harris, 2007). Literature continues to support the idea that students with disabilities are being socially devalued and marginalized while having little to no influence in making decisions that affect their lives (D'Andrea & Daniels, 2000). These students are seen as the minority or the lesser group by their peers and as such are being treated negatively. They experience segregation and oppression, often becoming the targets of verbal and physical violence due to being labeled a "minority." It is known that oppression within educational environments can negatively impact the success of

these students. School counselors have been criticized for their lack of advocacy for these affected students. Understanding the dynamics of oppression within the school is imperative if school counselors are to advocate for their students (Bailey, Getch, & Chen-Hayes, 2003; Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Vera & Speight, 2003).

Promoting awareness about disabilities can help create the equal environment that special education student and parents' desire (Gus, 2000). The Texas Autism Resource Guide for Effective Teaching, created an intervention program, the "circle of friends," which helps promote inclusion of special education students in the school setting. As a peer based approach the "circle of friends" proposes that students with autism engage in the school community along with peers in general education as a way to gain desired social coping skills such as improvements in empathy, problem solving, and communications skills among others (Barret & Randall, 2004; Whitaker; Barratt, Joy, Potter; & Thomas, 1998). The involvement of school counselors has increased due to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act [EAHCA] of 1975 now called the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which calls for more involvement on their part. Almost no research has been done to show that counselors have achieved the level of involvement desired towards students (Milsom, 2002). A finding from a study conducted by Milsom (2002) indicates that school counselors are fairly prepared in providing group counseling for students with disabilities. School counselors can find intervention programs that can create an opportunity to provide more services for students. School Counselors can advocate for change at their schools. They can support the idea of promoting a comprehensive school wide disability awareness curriculum aimed at decreasing and or eliminating bullying. This curriculum can increase integration



and acceptance of all students despite differences. All students are deserving of quality of life.

School counselors can use strategies and act as leaders in the schools and help by focusing on promoting the success of students with disabilities. In working systematically with school administration and personnel, school counselors can use the concept of self-advocacy interventions and use it with the implementation of curriculum aimed at fostering a safe environment for students with disabilities. It is important to therefore reach a point where students with disabilities are viewed as individuals who are part of the larger group. While using this same concept, it is proposed that it can be modified to fit the purpose of this curriculum.

#### *Safe School Environment*

With staggering problems of violence in the schools, and the high numbers of students being bullies and others being the victims of bullying, the school environment is not as safe as it may appear. Low level violence such as bullying and victimization has to be addressed early in a child's life. Bucher & Manning, 2005 addressed that prevention is more effective than reactionary approaches. Drake, Price, and Telljohann (2003) in Bucher & Manning, 2005 "found that while 86.3 percent of teachers had talks with bullies and victims after a problem arose, less than one-third of teachers set aside time to talk about bullying and ways to prevent it or work with students to create classroom rules to prevent bullying," (p. 58). With such evidence, it is important to consider ways in which to help our students engage in safe and appropriate interactions with their peers by working along with them to create an opportunity for a safe school environment for everyone that seeks to provide educational opportunities for all. It is important to

acknowledge that successful programs that aim to prevent school violence are those that involve those affected and which address the specific need of the individual school, (Bucher & Manning, 2005). In order for schools to become a safe learning environment for all, there have to be proactive measures. A safe school consists of a positive school climate where students, teachers, administrators, staff, and visitors are given a welcoming space to interact with one another. In doing so, the school is able to foster and promote positive interactions as well as a safe and welcoming school environment that delineates the importance of following school rules and abiding by the expected behaviors.

### *Inclusion*

A negative attitude about individuals with disabilities in the schools can create an unpleasant learning environment for students. Administrators, educators, and peers who may have a negative attitude about individuals with a disability can hold low expectations of their abilities thereby creating biases that may enhance discrimination, victimization, and bullying. Findings suggest that school principals who have previous training about disabilities hold positive attitudes about individuals with disabilities as opposed to principals that have no understanding of them. Those who have knowledge about disabilities support inclusion in their schools and support placing special education students in inclusive classrooms (Milsom, 2006). Inclusive settings provide students with a supportive environment, where children grow developmentally, learn along with their peers, gain social well-being and feel accepted (Vakil, Welton, O'Connor, & Kline, 2009). Swaim and Morgan (2001) have suggested that children without a disability have more positive attitudes about specific disabilities than of children with autism. Children with autism are more likely to be viewed more negatively and be less accepted by peers

than students who exhibit fewer behaviors. Counterbalancing the idea of social acceptance of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, previous studies have shown that inclusion of students in general classes does not increase rapid acceptance (friendship) from their peers (Buysse, Davis Goldman, & Skinner, 2002; Guralnick, Neville, Hammond, & Connor, 2007; Lee, Yoo, & Bak, 2003). Therefore, in order to achieve inclusion, the opportunities for peer group interaction among general education students and those with disabilities should continue to be implemented. Inclusion means everyone and schools can create this opportunities for their students.

Furthermore, Strain (1983) observed a population of special needs students, a category also included in the definition of disability. The researcher found that students with autism engaged in more peer interactions when they had recess with general education students than when they had recess with solely special education children. Playground time provides the opportunity for more social interaction among individuals with a special need. Faculty and staff could use this to create more positive acceptance and interactions. Researchers have made recommendations that propose that school staff be trained about understanding disabilities so that they could model positive social interactions and become advocates for promoting positive relationships between children with disabilities and general education children (Lieberman, James, & Ludwa, 2004; Pavri, 2004; Schepis, Reid, Owenbey, & Clary, 2003). Research supports the positive effects that result from social interactions and the formation of friendships, which gives children a sense of belonging in their peer groups (Fryxel & Kennedy, 1995). Fostering positive peer relations and interactions of all students within each classroom can help with creating a safe and inclusive school setting.

Inclusive settings not only create an opportunity for general education peers to interact with their peers with disabilities but it also gives the students with disabilities an opportunity to learn from their peers. This can improve their self-esteem, social skills, positive affective and behavioral outcomes as well as academic achievement (Alper & Ryndak, 1992). At the same time there are social benefits for students of the general education population. These students have the opportunity to learn skills, values, and attitudes that are related to human differences as they interact with their peers with disabilities, (Alper & Ryndak, 1992; Farrell, 2000; Karagiannis, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996). Programs and education can help dissipate negative stereotypes that are attributed to disabilities and in turn reduce the risk of bullying. Schools need to create a caring and safe educational environment. Children spend most of their days at school and it makes sense for schools to implement curriculums that promote positive change, while educating all students about disabilities in order to accept, recognize, and support students while also helping reduce bullying towards children with disabilities ( Hoover, & Stenhjem, 2003). Alper and Ryndak (1992) suggest that most American schools are designed to divide students in groups which emphasize differences as opposed to commonalities. Social interactions and the development of friendships is crucial, and creates positive effects for all children and therefore a curriculum that dissipates the idea of “difference” and welcomes interaction and positive peer relations will promote student with disabilities integration ( Alper & Ryndak, 1992; Schnorr, 1990). For such change we need the help of school personnel.

### *School Personnel Preparation*

Promoting peer understanding can be a lead way to overall awareness and acceptance of individuals characterized by a disability. The opportunity that professionals, faculty, and staff have to implement educational programs at their schools will measure the effectiveness the educator has in presenting and creating success in an inclusive setting for children with disabilities (Vakil, et al. 2009). The significance of legislation and continued research supporting the need for inclusion in the school setting highlights the need to recognize and become advocates for children with disabilities. A curriculum led by trained professionals, like school counselors, already in a supporting role position promotes fair treatment and the equal opportunity of children with disabilities and upholds the aforementioned equal opportunity legislation like IDEA.

Furthermore, the involvement of faculty, staff, and parents in the education of students with disabilities serves its purpose to raise awareness. Staff implementation of structured supportive strategies include: (a) setting clear behavioral and social expectations for the classroom, (b) identifying major ideas for each lesson, (c) using organizers, and (d) differentiating assessment for material taught (Anderson, 2007). Collaboration of all faculty and staff in school settings can enhance student experience. Teacher preparation and training programs about disabilities can help students with disabilities become a more integral population in schools. School professional staff is diverse and comprised of teachers with distinct training. Communicating knowledge and collaborating interdepartmentally can improve general education teacher awareness about disabilities. Learning how to interact and provide the best opportunities to integrate and educate a child with a disability can enhance their school experience in a positive way.

This will promote competency, effectiveness, and mentorship among the general education teacher staff and will build support to improving existing legislative educational mandates for school integration and the lives of many students with disabilities (Scheuermann, Webber, Boutot, & Goodwin, 2003). Strategies have to be developed and implemented by all of the individuals, faculty, staff, and peers at schools. The use of effective classroom and school interventions should be supported while more research in the field continues to be done (Hemmeter, 2000).

*Conclusion:*

The literature indicates that the dynamics of inclusion and acceptance of individuals with disabilities is complex and the lack of awareness about it continues to be a critical issue in the public school system. Students with disabilities are particularly faced with peer rejection, and are prone to being the victims of bullies, which reduces the quality of their school experience. Inclusive settings currently do not necessarily provide a safe environment for students with disabilities to thrive in. Peer discrimination and bullying continue to occur within the school setting. Students experience isolation, victimization, and marginalization within these confines.

School Counselors as the advocates for personal, social, and academic success of their students are key stakeholders. They can help foster positive change at their schools by supporting and advocating for a school wide curriculum that emphasizes the need for positive school environments. Not only is it important for school counselors to advocate, but also it is important that they move towards inclusion in their programming by supporting implementation of a curriculum that dissipates negative stereotypes and misinterpretation about disabilities. Taking a leadership role and collaborating with staff,

primarily teachers, is essential to meet legislative mandate and achieve greater peer acceptance and therefore reduce and / or eliminate the growing incidence of bullying in schools. Understanding the needs of students with disabilities is one of the first steps to move towards peer acceptance and inclusion and the involvement of school counselors, school administration, and school personnel in the implementation of awareness curriculums is essential to school environment improvement.

Bullying prevention programs such as the Olweus Core program are important since they allow schools to address the concerns about bullying and in turn guide the school to adopt such curriculum for implementation. The review of the literature on bullying prevention programs posited the importance that school culture plays in the success or failure of bullying prevention programs. Aligning resources including willing school personnel and increasing peer acceptance and inclusion through awareness instruction can meet expected goals. Research suggests that in order for bully prevention programs to give positive results, schools where the proposed curriculum is implemented have to share a same vision for change that emphasizes the importance of school-wide collaboration. Peer acceptance is possible, is the goal of this thesis project, and can happen by focusing on building collaboration and support among teachers, administrators and School Counselors first. Once built, achieving inclusion and peer acceptance can occur among student peer populations through instruction that supports educating the peer population about individual differences and of the importance of exhibiting respectful and collaborative behaviors towards others.

## CHAPTER III

### PROJECT AUDIENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION FACTORS

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of the Academic Counselors Conducting Educational Preparedness Techniques to Incorporate a Nexus for Guiding Students to Accept, Recognize, and Support Special Students, A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S. workshop/curriculum is to provide school counselors with a program to use and implement at their school sites. This will allow school administration and personnel (teachers) to take part in the curriculum which is comprised of:

- A 6.5 hour workshop
- A pre workshop questionnaire
- A three hour interactive PowerPoint presentation addressing the need for the curriculum
- Presentation of the *A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S. curriculum*
- Post workshop questionnaire

As evidenced in the discussion of the literature, there is a growing need for curriculum that addresses the needs of students with disabilities and the rise in bullying among the same population as it affects them directly during grades K-5. School counselors can lead and build support among school administrators and personnel to benefit students with disabilities. This proposed curriculum is a technique that guides qualified school counselors to help them continue advocating for the welfare of all of their students by providing them with a safe learning environment.



### *Project Development*

While having worked in the past with distinct behavioral analysis agencies and public school settings as a one to one assistant, I became aware of the behavior and inadequate treatment of general education peers towards special education classes in a high school setting. I noticed that peers made fun of or took advantage of how innocent and vulnerable other students were. They stared, made jokes, and at times took their food away. During this time I also found myself interning as a school counselor at other schools (elementary and high school settings) during my days off from work. I had the opportunity to witness such unfortunate peer interactions among students on a day to day basis. I was exposed to working with students of distinct ages, gender, ethnicity, ability and disability, and realized that if I wanted to help my students, something had to change. I realized that students who have a disability and are in special education classes, spend their break times at school with other students who have a disability, and peers from the general education population did not associate with them. I did however, observe that those general education students who were in an elective class called “Yes I Can,” at a high school in the city of Santa Clarita, taught students with disabilities social skills and daily life coping skills by modeling (mentoring) safe, and appropriate social skills. I witnessed that these mentors, interacted with the students with a disability outside of the Yes I Can elective class. I came to the conclusion that students who were unaware of the disabilities of their special education peers, and who had no prior interaction with them, were less likely to initiate an interaction with the students with a disability.

Having twin cousins with a disability was also one of the reasons why I wanted to help with this concerning issue, due to my concern of not wanting my cousins or the kids

that I have worked with to one day experience being bullied at their schools by peers. Students who have a lack of awareness could benefit from being exposed to a new learning experience to help increase their receptiveness for peer interactions with all students.

The awareness I gained inspired my optimism to help bring change to the school community. I realized that as a future school counselor I had the opportunity to implement programs that could help dissipate such an unfair treatment of students with disabilities. Students who I worked with through my internship were students who had general education classes and whom I realized did not have interactions with their peers who had disabilities at their school. Coming to this understanding gave me the drive to one day seek an opportunity to bring awareness into the schools so that my students could learn to be accepting, inclusive, supportive and integral members of society. The idea to create a workshop and curriculum for school counselors was inspired by the need for awareness as I witnessed the unfair treatment that students with a disability received from peers who had no understanding of the students with a disability. In addition, the A.C.C. E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. curriculum was adapted from the Olweu's Core Bullying Prevention Program in an effort to create awareness and prevent and or eliminate bullying of this population.

#### *Intended Audience*

The intended audience for this curriculum is predominantly school counselors who are interested in a program that focuses on bringing a positive outcome to their school sites. Although predominantly intended for the use of school counselors, school administrators or personnel could potentially lead this curriculum, once they have the

necessary understanding of it. The development of this curriculum as a technique aimed for creating safe school environments is intended mainly for the use of school counselors across grade levels to help all students become accepting of others (peers), despite physical or mental differences. This curriculum is intended to focus on addressing the importance of the educational piece, which brings awareness and knowledge to all students despite age.

### *Personal Qualifications*

Use of this curriculum is intended for school counselors who have an interest in further exploring and learning about the difficulties those students with disabilities face in the public school setting. As well as, personnel who have the desire to help improve the school environment by advocating for those students who are being bullied. Essentially, school counselors implementing this curriculum should be competent, by possessing the essential knowledge needed in order to advocate and promote the use of this curriculum as a way to help all their students meet their academic, career, and personal/social development. The facilitator should possess a Master's degree in school counseling, have a membership in a professional counseling association, follow the American School Counselor Association, ASCA model, and have an understanding of the need to provide a safe and welcoming school environment for all students.

In addition, the facilitator should be driven and motivated to capture the audiences' attention and at the same time focus on promoting the need for awareness about disabilities to guide general education students accept, recognize and support students with disabilities within their schools.

The purpose of this curriculum is for school counselors to use it as an additional technique that can assist them in promoting school-wide awareness of disabilities and for them to know of the struggles that many students are going through on a daily basis. Additionally, the curriculum will be a learning tool for administrators, and school personnel, aside from it being a tool that will be presented to students once this curriculum is adopted by the school. The outcome will allow for all stakeholders of the school environment to gain invaluable information that will help foster a welcoming and safe school environment. Essentially, school counselors implementing this curriculum should be competent and possess the essential knowledge needed in order to advocate and promote the use of this curriculum as a way to help all their students meet their social, emotional, and academic goals.

#### *Environment and Equipment*

The curriculum presentation should be held in a room with ample space to fit as many people as possible who wish to be participants of this curriculum orientation. The setting of the room will be left to the discretion of the presenters while keeping in mind that it is important that all participants present have good visibility of the presentation. Number of participants will be limited to the space available for the presentation. It is intended for this curriculum to be adaptable to the environment leaving flexibility for the time and day most suitable for the presentation to take place. It is suggested that the curriculum take place during a professional development day. This curriculum is intended to enhance the knowledge of professionals in the field of counseling. In addition the curriculum should be co-facilitated, with gender not being a factor. Duration of this

presentation should be 6.5 hours, which allows time for a pre and post questionnaire, as well as time for questions and answers.

This evaluation of the *A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S* curriculum is designed to examine the impact that an awareness curriculum can have on the general education students in gaining knowledge and to awareness of developmental disabilities, and to measure level of acceptance of the individuals with a developmental disability in hopes of creating acceptance, which fortifies inclusion in schools.

The materials that are necessary consist of, the disk which includes the *A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S PowerPoint* presentation. In addition, a laptop, LCD projector and screen will be necessary to display the presentation. As well as, pre and post questionnaires which will assess prior knowledge and knowledge obtained after the presentation. Participants will be provided with handouts of the PowerPoint presentation, which can be reprinted and used from this presentation. In addition, the material for the curriculum to use with students will be included, and can also be reprint-able. The curriculum will provide the agenda, necessary lesson plans, handouts, and required material for each of the activities.

#### *Limitations of the Project*

This project stresses the need for school counselors to take on a leadership role and gather support from staff in their schools to educate them about disabilities, stress the need to treat everyone with respect, and accepting individual differences. The proposed curriculum is a collaborative effort and therefore some of the limitations may include not receiving support from all staff in the school setting. Among those who may refuse to participate are teachers who may feel the curriculum is unnecessary and view it as

additional work and responsibility. This therefore implies that the staff who is executing this curriculum will need to constantly collaborate with school personnel, primarily teachers, to help implement the curriculum and ensure that all students are being taught the necessary material. In this case, the school counselor will play a mediator and supporting role for teachers in order to meet the expected goals. It will be the responsibility of the school counselor to address any concern that may arise and intervene, when necessary, to ensure that the curriculum is adequately implemented.

The school counselor who takes the lead in coordinating the *A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S* curriculum at the school should discuss the vision and emphasize the importance of teacher collaboration but must also recognize teacher interests to achieve personnel buy in. In order for school counselors to gather support they must also ensure that the partnerships of collaboration established across personnel staff are well coordinated and communicated. Building this same type of support towards those who feel the curriculum is unnecessary is essential as well.

This project is to be used as a guiding technique to help foster a safe and inclusive environment and prevent bullying against students with disabilities. It is not to be used as quick fix curriculum. Rather, it is believed that change will happen progressively. The purpose of the PowerPoint presentation is to educate, train, and encourage school counselors to have an interest in creating a safe, inclusive, bully free environment at their school. The presentation will be the first step in gathering support and it will be essential to highlight that not only can students with disabilities excel in their school and peer interactions but that existing legislative educational mandates like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, helps increase inclusion at the school in an effort to

provide equal education opportunities to students with disabilities. This curriculum will be another approach at closing the gap and achieving that goal. Furthermore, limited funding may have limitations on curriculum implementation. Seeking opportunities to fund the project will be discussed since it will be necessary for school counselors to obtain the funds to implement the curriculum at their school. It will be suggested that school counselors discuss funding with their school and consider fundraisers, grants and seek sponsorship from local community businesses, and private companies such as a non-profit organizations interested in funding programs or curriculums that support creating a safe environment within public school systems.

#### *Workshop Outline*

The proposed workshop is structured into a one day 6.5 hour workshop for school counselors. In addition curriculum for sessions that school counselors could use to educate school staff will be presented to educate them about the topic and to get an overview of what they will be using in their classroom. The second portion of this workshop will focus on giving an overview of the sessions that teachers will have with their students. These sessions aim to educate students about the topic and teach them about bullying and disabilities, and use activities to teach students to treat others with dignity and respect in efforts to reduce/eliminate bullying. Each session will follow specific targeted goals as well as objectives. Materials will be listed and in addition the duration of the session's activity will also be included. Handouts for the lessons will be included in the Appendix A.

- Welcome
- Leadership vision

- Overview of the Bullying problem
- break
- Statistical Support / Introductions and expectations
- lunch
- Purpose of the *A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S curriculum*
- Relevant Research- Disabilities
- Inclusion
- Relevant Research- Bullying/ Bullying Prevention
- Plan of Action/ Need/ Goal development funding necessary
- Focus, Collaboration, Role of Staff, Reasons to Act “today”
- Resources, Summary, activity & questions

In addition, the curriculum for A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. will be included in Appendix B.

#### A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. Curriculum

##### **First step-School Level**

- **Focusing on targeting the entire school population**
- **Surveying all students using a Likert -Scale questionnaire regarding pre/post knowledge about disabilities and it’s correlation to bullying**
- **Opportunity to learn and discuss about bullying**
- **Having better supervision of students during recess and lunch**
- **Involving school administrators, staff, and parent partners, at solving problems.**

##### **Second step- Classroom Level**

- **Targeting all students within the classroom**
- **Create an inclusive environment by encouraging students to develop class rules against bullying**
- **Rules that are enforced within the classroom**

##### **Third step- Individual Level**

- **Target those students who are or are considered to be the bullies or the victims of bullies.**



## CHAPTER IV

### Conclusion

#### *Summary*

Federal legislation is helping to create an inclusive environment for students with a disability through policies like IDEA, which helps create an environment of equal opportunity and ambiance for students. It fits the notion that understanding and acceptance of the students with a disability is imperative. The implementation of disabilities awareness curriculums such as *A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S.* at k-5 schools is a positive effort to help increase knowledge within the schools of school counselors, administration and students of the general population, and promote awareness and acceptance of students with disabilities.

The need for all students to learn about individual differences, and to be accepting of students who have a disability while they are at the elementary level creates an opportunity for children to grow and develop into accepting, caring, inclusive, and integral members of society. The opportunity for such results allows school counselors to use helpful strategies, tools, and or existing interventions or programs in efforts to help those students who exhibit bullying behaviors and to help the bully and victim alike, while also preventing future victimization or marginalization of students. Such need for curriculum, programs and workshops aimed at creating awareness of disabilities, acceptance, integration, and reduced or eliminated bullying is most needed within schools that have high violence rates, where the school climate is hostile and bullying plays a pivotal role among peer interactions. As children go on to later grades through the educational system, students continue acting on their learned behaviors as children,

therefore it is important to use preventative measures to help them learn of accepting others and of embracing friendships.

Creating awareness about the importance of curriculum aimed at promoting integration of students with disabilities within school was based on the need for advocacy and equal inclusive treatment of students. The literature suggested that current inclusive settings are not indicative of acceptance of students with disabilities from their general education peers and in fact these children experience bullying. This thesis project is aimed at teaching school counselors essential information that will help promote the need for curriculum that will foster educational environments where students are accepting and supportive of others despite individual differences. In addition it is aimed at those school counselors who are interested in implementing such a curriculum at their school. The purpose of this project is to create awareness within schools about disabilities to promote student acceptance of others while fostering a safe space that helps to develop students with integrity.

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Appendix A

**A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S Workshop Pre-Questionnaire**

1. In General, would you say that you are aware that students with disabilities are victims of bullying at your school?

Disagree (0-2)  
Agree (3-5)

(Circle One)

- Completely or never.....0
- Strongly or almost never.....1
- Somewhat or rarely.....2
- Somewhat or often.....3
- Strongly or almost always.....4
- Completely or always.....5

**Self Evaluation and Awareness Questionnaire**

**Title/Position**

School Counselor Assistant Principal\_\_\_\_ School Administration\_\_\_\_

Elementary School Counselor\_\_\_\_ Staff/ Teacher\_\_\_\_

Middle School Counselor \_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

High School Counselor\_\_\_\_

*Knowledge:* 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you think there is currently a problem with peer interactions at school? 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you believe that bullying is a problem at your school? 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you know what population gets bullied most? 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you know what a disability is? 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you think that students with disabilities are treated equally at school? 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you know someone with a disability? 0 1 2 3 4 5

*Feelings:* 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you feel that your school is safe? 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you feel that your school is an inclusive setting? 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you feel that your school is bully free? 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you feel school wide bullying prevention curriculums/programs are important? 0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you feel there is a need to create awareness and acceptance of individuals with a disability? 0 1 2 3 4 5

# A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S

Academic Counselors Conducting Educational Preparedness Techniques to  
Incorporate a Nexus for Guiding Students to Accept, Recognize & Support  
Special students

**Notes:** Capture the audience's attention and ask them to take their seat as the workshop is about to start.

1. Introduce yourself and co-leading partner applicable.
2. Provide audience with a brief description of your role/position
3. Emphasize how important and meaningful it is for members of the audience to be present.
4. Explain that you will be passing out the **A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S Workshop Pre-Questionnaire**
5. Pass out the handouts with the PowerPoint for the audience to follow and take notes on. Once handouts are passed out...
6. Proceed to the next slide.



## OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

- 9:00-9:15 Welcome/ Pre-Questionnaire
- 9:15-9:45 Leadership vision
- 9:45-11:15 Overview of the Bullying problem
- 11:15-11:30 break
- 11:30-12:00 Statistical Support / Introductions and expectations
- 12:00-1:00 lunch
- 1:00-1:30 Purpose of the *A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S curriculum*
- 1:30-2:00 Relevant Research- Disabilities
- 2:00-2:15 Inclusion
- 2:15-2:30 Relevant Research- Bullying/ Bullying Prevention
- 2:30-2:45 Plan of Action/ Need/ Goal development funding necessary
- 2:45-3:00 Focus, Collaboration, Role of Staff, Reasons to Act "today"
- 3:00-3:30 Resources, Summary, Post-Questionnaire, activity & questions

**Notes:** Briefly discuss the overview of the workshop presentation and inform the audience that you will attempt to cover the material in a timely manner. Also, make them aware that they can get up and use the restroom as needed.

1. Ask all audience members to turn off their phones or to put them on silence.
2. Ask them to step out if needed.
3. Gently and respectfully, encourage them to reframe from engaging in conversation while the workshop is in progress.
4. Thank them in advance for their cooperation.
5. Proceed to the next slide.

VIDEO – HI I'M JONAH



**Notes:** Dim the lights prior to starting the video, play it until it is over.

1. Turn lights on.
2. Ask audience if any of them had seen this video before.
3. Encourage comments and provide a safe space for reactions.
4. Thank the audience participants.
5. Proceed to the next slide.

# VISION

Create awareness within schools about  
Disabilities, to promote student acceptance of  
others while *fostering a safe bully-free space* that shapes  
students with integrity.

**Notes:** Read the vision out loud. Explain that the vision is an overview of the goal that encompasses key leadership ideas. “Create, promote, fostering”

1. Proceed to the next slide.

## OVERVIEW OF THE **BULLYING** PROBLEM

- Bullying is considered the most common form of violence.
- Cohn and Cantor (2003) discuss the prevalence, and characteristics of the bullying phenomenon.:
  - 3.7 million youth engage in bullying
  - 3.2 million are the victims of bullying on a yearly basis..

**Notes:** In a normal to serious voice, talk about the overview of the BULLYING problem.

1. Ask for reactions.
2. Introduce the 15 minute break and remind the audience to be back in 15 minutes.  
If on time, by 11:30 am.

## STATISTICAL SUPPORT:

- 250 violent deaths in schools due to bullying since 1992.
- **Physical bullying** increases during the elementary level, increases in middle school, yet declines at the high school level. However, verbal abuse continues.
- More than *two-thirds of students* consider that schools respond poorly to bullying.
- Students believe that they receive *no help or support* from adults at the school.
- *25% of the time* teachers *do not see anything wrong* with bullying or putdowns; they only intervene *four percent* of the time

-Cohn & Cantor (2003)

**Notes:** 11:30am welcome the audience back. In a normal to serious voice, talk about the statistics and look for reactions from the audience.

1. Proceed to the next slide.

## INTRODUCTION

- Removing stigmas about disabilities creates positive school experiences for students with disabilities.
- Legislation has helped increase the educational opportunity of students with disabilities in the school settings by mandating adequate educational services to all students with a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

**Notes:** Review the slide and proceed to the next slide.

## EXPECTATIONS

- **Equal Opportunity for inclusion** - This curriculum is an essential tool for schools since it positively impacts the lives of all students and creates equal educational opportunities.
- **Peer acceptance**- helps students become aware of the concept of disabilities as well as learn to **accept, recognize and support** their fellow peers
- **Individual Differences** -learn that individual differences does not equate to being less

**Notes:** Review the expectations that the A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S curriculum has; enthusiastically emphasize the bold yellow words.

1. Proceed to the next slide.
2. Introduce the 1 hour lunch and remind the audience to be back in 1 hour. If on time, by 1:00 pm.
3. Instruct order of getting lunch if provided by the staff/school hosting the event, or provide the audience with neighboring restaurant options.
4. Ask audience members to be back on time.

## PURPOSE OF THE A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. CURRICULUM

- **A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S.** is a school wide curriculum made up for professionals who seek to emphasize the need for equal treatment and acceptance of individual differences in a safe, bully free, and inclusive school setting.

**Notes:** Reconvene from lunch and enthusiastically present the purpose of the curriculum. Remember, your goal is to emphasize the need of such curriculum at their school.

1. Proceed to the next slide.
2. Pass out 4 copies of the handouts for the A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. curriculum. Get the copy back once it has been looked at by all the audience members.



## PURPOSE

### *A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S:*

- Educate and train school counselors who have an interest in creating a safe, inclusive, bully free environment at their school.
- Curriculum is flexible and adaptable to fit the goals of the school and to target the intended K-5 age population

**Notes:** Enthusiastically present the purpose of the curriculum.  
Remember, your goal is to emphasize the need of such curriculum at their school.

1. Proceed to the next slide.

## RELEVANT RESEARCH- DISABILITIES

- Disabilities is the term that encompasses a wide variety of mental and physical disorders which may be severe or chronic (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004).
- Boyle et al. (1994) suggests that developmental disabilities are prevalent in the United States with a ratio of 1 in every 6 children ages  $\leq 17$ .

**Notes:** Here you are supporting your argument for the purpose. Review the literature with the audience.

1. Clarify, or answer questions if needed.
2. Proceed to the next slide.

## RELEVANT RESEARCH

- Milsom (2006) reported in Nowicki and Sandieson's 1999 to 2000 study about attitudes towards children with disabilities and concluded:
  - Children without disabilities regularly prefer interacting with peers without a disability.
  - Students who had a friend or classmate with a disability were more accepting of them

-(McDougall, Dewit, King, Miller, and Killip, 2004).

**Notes:** Continue supporting your argument for the purpose. Review the literature with the audience.

1. Clarify, or answer questions if needed.
2. Proceed to the next slide.

## INCLUSION

- *Negative attitudes about individuals with disabilities in the school creates an unpleasant learning environment for these students.*
- Inclusive settings provide students with a supportive environment, where children grow developmentally, learn along with their peers, gain social well-being and feel accepted (Vakil, Welton, O'Connor, & Kline, 2009).

**Notes:** Review the information about inclusion and get feedback/comments from the audience after you ask: How many here can say that their school setting is inclusive?

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.

## RELEVANT RESEARCH- BULLYING

- Literature has shown that bullying is a nationwide problem since the harassment of youth with disabilities continues to increase (Hoover, J., & Stenhjem, P. (2003).
- From bullying prevention programs we learn that maintaining an informed and trained staff is significant to addressing problems.

**Notes:** Review the information about Bullying and get feedback/comments from the audience after you ask: How many here can say that their school setting has bullying or no bullying problems?

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.

## BULLYING PREVENTION

- Known as victimization, Besag, 1989 and Olweus, 1991 address bullying as a form of aggression in which there is an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim which takes place among peers.
- It is important to acknowledge that the effectiveness of a bullying prevention program such as the Olweus Core program is determined by the school culture.
  - School Culture: Donahoe, 1997 in Coyle, 2008 defined as, the values, beliefs, behaviors, rules, products, signs, and the symbols of a school.

**Notes:** Review the information and ask the audience if they are familiarized with any particular bullying prevention program? Ask them to share.

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.

## OLWEU'S CORE PROGRAM-BULLYING PREVENTION

- According to *Olweu's Core Program*, there are three measures to follow.
  - The first level consists of *measures at the school level*
  - The second level consists having *measures at the class level* which focuses on targeting all students within the classroom
  - The third level the *individual level targeting students* that are known to be or are suspected of being the bullies or the victims of bullies

**Notes:** Review the measures of the Olweu's core program for bullying prevention.

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.

# PLAN OF ACTION

## Olweus's Core program

### first step-School Level

having focus on targeting the entire school population  
surveying all students regarding bullying,  
school conference on bullying  
having better supervision of students during their breaks at school,  
parent and staff cooperation at resolving problems

### Step two- Classroom Level

targeting all students within the classroom  
where students help develop class rules against bullying  
rules that are consistently enforced  
having students holding meetings about bullying

### Third step- Individual Level

targeting students that are known to be or are suspected of being the bullies or the victims of bullies.

## A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S

### first step-School Level

Focusing on targeting the entire school population

Surveying all students using a Likert Scale questionnaire regarding pre/post knowledge about disabilities and it's correlation to bullying

Opportunity to learn and discuss about bullying

having better supervision of students during recess and lunch

involving school administrators, staff, parent partners, at solving problems.

### Second step- Classroom Level

targeting all students within the classroom

create an inclusive environment by encouraging students to develop class rules against bullying

Rules that are enforced within the classroom

### Third step- Individual Level

Target those students who are or are considered to be the bullies or the victims of bullies.

**Notes:** Here, review the Olweu's core program and talk about A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S being inspired and adapted to fit the goals of this curriculum. Talk about its relevance to the school setting.

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.



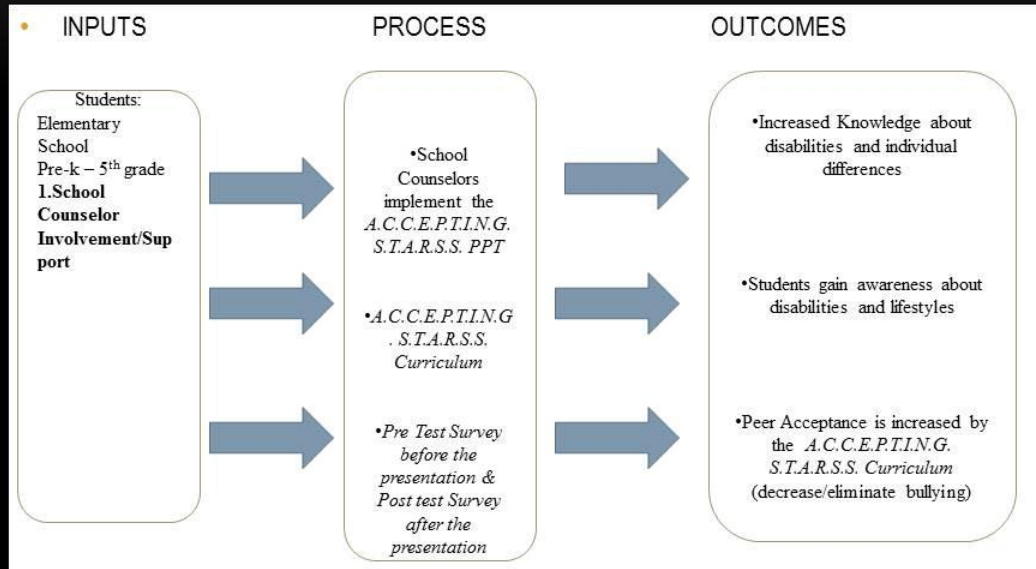
## NEED

- Children who are or who have been victims of bullying are individuals who deserve a safe and welcoming environment at their schools. Victimization of children only serves to isolate those who are perceived as small, physically and socially marginalized from what is socially acceptable (Flynt, S.W, Morton, R.C., 2007) and as weak, and vulnerable.
- Brendtro (2001) addressed that peer victimization of students with disabilities is one of today's most overlooked educational concerns. Although efforts of inclusion have been established, the need for promoting awareness of disabilities still exists.

**Notes:** Review the information on the slide and emphasize the need for curriculum that promotes safe school environments, hence, A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.

# VISION-GOAL



**Notes:** Review the vision and goal plan of action.

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.

## FOCUS

- This curriculum focuses on educating students about disabilities, treating everyone with respect, and accepting individual differences.
- Decrease/Eliminate Bullying
  - Literature has shown that bullying is a nationwide problem since the harassment of youth with disabilities continues to increase (Hoover & Stenhjem, 2003). From bullying prevention programs we learn that maintaining an informed and trained staff is significant to addressing problems

**Notes:** Review what the focus of the curriculum is and emphasize what the outcomes can be if no action is taken.

1. Proceed to the next slide.

## COLLABORATION

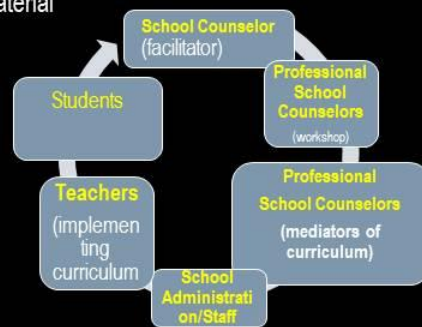
- This curriculum is intended to be a collaborative piece that allows for school counselors, administrators, and others in the school setting to imagine exciting possibilities of change of a better educational environment for all members of the school.
- Collaboration will be essential, as the school counselors will take on the role of the mediator, who will ensure that the program is being appropriately implemented for the safeguard of the children.

**Notes:** Emphasize that in order for the curriculum to work, it is intended for all those interested in creating safe school environments need to work as a team.

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.

## ROLE OF THE SCHOOL STAFF

- Staff executing this curriculum will need to constantly collaborate with everyone implementing the curriculum at the school to ensure that all students are being taught the necessary material



**Notes:** Once again, emphasize collaboration and review the diagram to show them how all participants are interconnected and can help make a positive difference.

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.

## TOP REASONS TO ACT “TODAY” TO CHANGE, WHILE WORKING AS A TEAM:

- To open the climate for communication
- To work collaboratively to solve challenges
- To appreciate individual differences and strengths.
- To trust in the power to change school climate
- To act as leaders
- To have a shared vision
- To envision a safe, inclusive, safe environment
- Think of a positive future
- Make it yours, implement, and see the difference.

**Notes:** Continue discussing collaboration, team building, and leadership.

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.

## STEPS TO TAKE

- Reach out to those students who appear to be the victims of bullying, victimization, marginalization, stigmas
- Be proactive about the bullying procedures by:
  - **Adopt** and implement a no bullying policy.
  - **Foster** a safe climate/ school environment.
  - **Provide** reassessment opportunities.

**Notes:** Remind them of the important role they play at their school. Ask them to imagine what their school would be like if they were part of this movement. Stress how important their role as a school counselor is.

1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.

# COLLABORATION

The collaboration among staff and interested participants is the first step to create a school environment that is accepting of all students, regardless of disabilities or no disabilities

Imagine a future self facilitating a sense of hope

**Notes:** Read the collaboration paragraph, motivate and invite them to imagine a future self while facilitating a sense of hope.

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1. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
2. Proceed to the next slide.



## IT STARTS WITH YOU

- Be proactive
- Identify the need
- Assess your school environment
- Are there incidences of bullying of students with disabilities?
- Do you feel that your school can benefit from bullying prevention curriculums?
- Realize that you are a key player, you are a resource!
- Use school wide questionnaires where you get the input of your students.
- Implement and run curriculums/ programs!

**Notes:** Be motivating, and randomly verbalize the slide phrases to members of the audience to engage them and remind them that they matter and that their help is needed.

1. Talk about funding, mention that it will be necessary for school counselors to obtain the funds to implement the curriculum at their school. Suggest that school counselors discuss funding with their school and consider fundraisers, grants and seek sponsorship from local community businesses, and private companies such as a non-profit organization interested in funding programs or curriculums that support creating a safe environment within public school systems.
2. Allow for a few comments/answers then,
3. Proceed to the next slide.

## INFORMATION IS KNOWLEDGE, BE INFORMED!

- [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)
- [www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org)
- [www.teenangels.org](http://www.teenangels.org)
- [www.onguardonline.gov](http://www.onguardonline.gov)
- [www.humanrelations.lausd.net](http://www.humanrelations.lausd.net)
- LAUSD and Bullying:
  - [http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?\\_pageid=33,1124515&-dad=ptl&\\_schema=PTL\\_EP](http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?_pageid=33,1124515&-dad=ptl&_schema=PTL_EP)
- Tools to use:
  - [http://pathwayscourses.samhsa.gov/bully/bully\\_fs.htm](http://pathwayscourses.samhsa.gov/bully/bully_fs.htm)
  - [http://www.stopbullying.gov/community/tip\\_sheets/assessment\\_tools.pdf](http://www.stopbullying.gov/community/tip_sheets/assessment_tools.pdf)

**Notes:** Highly encourage them to take a look at these website links and to continue their research on activities/interventions/ literature, and law about bullying.

1. Give a brief summary
2. Pass out the **A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S** Workshop Post-Questionnaire
3. Ask audience members to hold on to pass the questionnaires to the far left of them and pick them up.
4. Ask them to fill out and discuss the Activity handout attached to the back of their handouts.
5. Thank everyone for attending the day workshop and for showing an interest in the well being and safety of their students. And remind them that the resources are included in the handout they were given.

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- Besag, V.E. (1989). *Bullies and victims in schools: A guide to understanding and management*. Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press.
- Boyle, C., & Decoufle, P. (1994). Prevalence and health impact of developmental disabilities in US children. *Pediatrics, 93*(3), 399. Retrieved from Academic Search Elite database.
- Brendtro, L. (2001). Worse than sticks and stones: Lesson from research on ridicule. *Reclaiming Children and Youth: Journal of Strength-Based Interventions, 10*(1), 47-49.

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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2004). Developmental Disabilities.  
Retrieved on April 25, 2010 from: L:\journal articles for thesis\Developmental Disabilities, DD, NCBDDD, CDC.mht
- Cohn, A., & Canter, A. (n.d). *Bullying: What schools and parents can do*. (National Association of School Psychologists Fact Sheet). Retrieved April 15, 2012, from [http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/bullying\\_fs.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/bullying_fs.aspx)
- Coyle, H. (2008). School Culture Benchmarks: Bridges and Barriers to Successful Bullying Prevention Program Implementation. *Journal Of School Violence, 7*(2), 105-122.
- D'Andrea, M., & Daniels, J. (2002). Youth advocacy. In Astramovich, R. L, & Harris, K.R. (2007). Promoting self-advocacy among minority students in school counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 85*, 269-276.
- Donahoe, T. (1997). Finding the way: Structure, time, and culture in school improvement. In M. Fullan (Ed.), *The challenge of school change* (pp. 235-254), Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Training and Publishing.

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- Hoover, J., & Stenhjem, P. (2003). Bullying and teasing of youth with disabilities: creating positive school environments for effective inclusion. *Issue 3, 2*, 1-6.
- McDougall, J., DeWit, D.J., King, G., Miller, L.T., & Killip, S. (2004). High school-aged youths' attitudes toward their peers with disabilities: The role of school and student interpersonal factors. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 51, 287-313.
- Milsom, A. (2006). Creating Positive School Experiences for Students with Disabilities. ASCA, Professional School Counseling. Retrieved April 25, 2010 from: <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/files/10-1-66%20Milsom.pdf>
- Vakil, S., Welton, E., O'Connor, B., & Kline, L. (2009). Inclusion means everyone! The role of the early childhood educator when including young children with autism in the classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36(4), 321-326. doi:10.1007/s10643-008-0289-5.

**A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S Workshop Post-Questionnaire**

1. In General, would you say that you are aware that students with disabilities are victims of bullying at your school?

Disagree (0-2)  
Agree (3-5)

*(Circle One)*

- Completely or never.....0
- Strongly or almost never.....1
- Somewhat or rarely.....2
- Somewhat or often.....3
- Strongly or almost always.....4
- Completely or always.....5

**Self Evaluation and Awareness Questionnaire**

**Title/Position**

School Counselor Assistant Principal\_\_\_\_      School Administration\_\_\_\_  
 Elementary School Counselor\_\_\_\_      Staff/ Teacher\_\_\_\_  
 Middle School Counselor \_\_\_\_      Other\_\_\_\_\_  
 High School Counselor\_\_\_\_\_

*Knowledge:*      0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you think there is currently a problem with peer interactions at school? 0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you believe that bullying is a problem at your school?      0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you know what population gets bullied most?      0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you know what a disability is?      0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you think that students with disabilities are treated equally at school? 0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you know someone with a disability?      0 1 2 3 4 5

*Feelings:*      0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you feel that your school is safe?      0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you feel that your school is an inclusive setting?      0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you feel that your school is bully free?      0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you feel school wide bullying prevention curriculums/programs are important?      0 1 2 3 4 5  
 Do you feel there is a need to create awareness and acceptance of individuals with a disability? 0 1 2 3 4 5

Slide 1



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Slide 2



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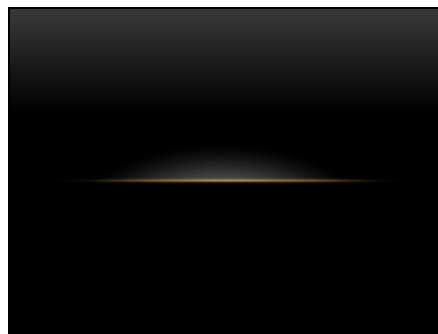
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Slide 3



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Slide 4

**VISION**

Create awareness within schools about  
Disabilities, to promote student acceptance of  
others while fostering a safe bully-free space that shapes  
students with integrity.

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Slide 5

**OVERVIEW OF THE BULLYING PROBLEM**

- Bullying is considered the most common form of violence.
- Cohn and Cantor (2003) discuss the prevalence, and characteristics of the bullying phenomenon.
  - 3.7 million youth engage in bullying
  - 3.2 million are the victims of bullying on a yearly basis.

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Slide 6

**STATISTICAL SUPPORT:**

- 250 violent deaths in schools due to bullying since 1992.
- Physical bullying increases during the elementary level, increases in middle school, yet declines at the high school level. However, verbal abuse continues.
- More than two-thirds of students consider that schools respond poorly to bullying.
- Students believe that they receive no help or support from adults at the school.
- 25% of the time teachers do not see anything wrong with bullying or pull-downs; they only intervene four percent of the time

-Cohn & Cantor (2003)

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Slide 7

**INTRODUCTION**

- Removing stigmas about disabilities creates positive school experiences for students with disabilities.
- Legislation has helped increase the educational opportunity of students with disabilities in the school settings by mandating adequate educational services to all students with a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 1990).

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Slide 8

**EXPECTATIONS**

- **Equal Opportunity for inclusion** - This curriculum is an essential tool for schools since it positively impacts the lives of all students and creates equal educational opportunities.
- **Peer acceptance**- helps students become aware of the concept of disabilities as well as learn to **accept, recognize and support** their fellow peers
- **Individual Differences** -learn that individual differences does not equate to being less

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Slide 9

**PURPOSE OF THE A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S CURRICULUM**

- **A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S.** is a school wide curriculum made up for professionals who seek to emphasize the need for equal treatment and acceptance of individual differences in a safe, bully free, and inclusive school setting.

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Slide 10

**PURPOSE**

*A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S.:*

- Educate and train school counselors who have an interest in creating a safe, inclusive, bully free environment at their school.
- Curriculum is flexible and adaptable to fit the goals of the school and to target the intended K-5 age population

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Slide 11

**RELEVANT RESEARCH- DISABILITIES**

- Disabilities is the term that encompasses a wide variety of mental and physical disorders which may be severe or chronic (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004).
- Boyle et al. (1994) suggests that developmental disabilities are prevalent in the United States with a ratio of 1 in every 6 children ages <17.

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Slide 12

**RELEVANT RESEARCH**

- Milson (2006) reported in Nowicki and Sanderson's 1999 to 2000 study about attitudes towards children with disabilities and concluded:
  - Children without disabilities regularly prefer interacting with peers without a disability.
  - Students who had a friend or classmate with a disability were more accepting of them.

-[McDougal, Dewit, King, Miller, and Kilip, 2004].

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### Slide 13

**INCLUSION**

- Negative attitudes about individuals with disabilities in the school creates an unpleasant learning environment for these students.
- Inclusive settings provide students with a supportive environment, where children grow developmentally, learn along with their peers, gain social well-being and feel accepted (Vekil, Walton, O'Connor, & Kline, 2009).

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### Slide 14

**RELEVANT RESEARCH- BULLYING**

- Literature has shown that bullying is a nationwide problem since the harassment of youth with disabilities continues to increase (Hoover, J. & Stenlyem, P. (2003).
- From bullying prevention programs we learn that maintaining an informed and trained staff is significant to addressing problems.

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### Slide 15

**BULLYING PREVENTION**

- Known as victimization, Besag, 1989 and Olweus, 1991 address bullying as a form of aggression in which there is an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim which takes place among peers.
- It is important to acknowledge that the effectiveness of a bullying prevention program such as the Olweus Core program is determined by the school culture.
  - School Culture: Donahoe, 1997 in Coyle, 2008 defined as, the values, beliefs, behaviors, rules, products, signs, and the symbols of a school.

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Slide 16

**OLWEU'S CORE PROGRAM-BULLYING PREVENTION**

- According to Olweu's Core Program, there are three measures to follow.
- The first level consists of *measures of the school level*
- The second level consists having *measures of the class level* which focuses on targeting all students within the classroom
- The third level the *individual level targeting students* that are known to be or are suspected of being the bullies or the victims of bullies

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Slide 17

**PLAN OF ACTION**

**Olweus's Core program**

**A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S**

**First step-School Level**  
having focus on targeting the entire school population  
surveying all students regarding bullying  
conducting all staff meetings regarding bullying  
school conference on bullying  
having better supervision of students during their breaks at school  
promoting staff cooperation at resolving problems

**Step two-Classroom Level**  
targeting all students within the classroom  
where students help develop class rules against bullying  
rules that are consistently enforced  
having students holding meetings about bullying

**Third step-Individual Level**  
targeting students that are known to be or are suspected of being the bullies or the victims of bullies

**First step-School Level**  
Focusing on targeting the entire school population  
Surveying all students using a Likert Scale questionnaire  
conducting all staff meetings regarding bullying and its consequences to bullying  
Openness to learn and discuss about bullying  
having better supervision of students during recess and lunch  
involving school administrators, staff, parent partners, at solving problems.

**Second step-Classroom Level**  
targeting all students within the classroom  
create an inclusive environment by encouraging students to develop class rules against bullying  
Rules that are enforced within the classroom

**Third step-Individual Level**  
Target those students who are or are considered to be the bullies or the victims of bullies.

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Slide 18

**NEED**

- Children who are or who have been victims of bullying are individuals who deserve a safe and welcoming environment at their schools. Victimization of children only serves to isolate those who are perceived as small, physically and socially marginalized from what is socially acceptable (Flynt, S.W, Morton, R.C., 2007) and as weak, and vulnerable.
- Brendro (2001) addressed that peer victimization of students with disabilities is one of today's most overlooked educational concerns. Although efforts of inclusion have been established, the need for promoting awareness of disabilities still exists.

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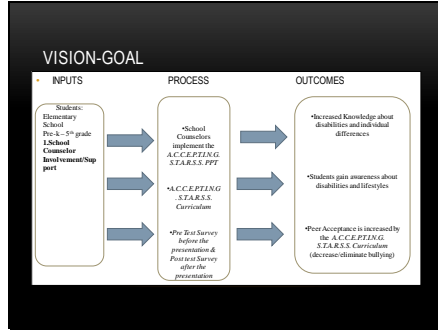
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Slide 19



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Slide 20

**FOCUS**

- This curriculum focuses on educating students about disabilities, treating everyone with respect, and accepting individual differences.
- Decrease/Eliminate Bullying
  - Literature has shown that bullying is a nationwide problem since the harassment of youth with disabilities continues to increase (Hoover & Starnheim, 2003). From bullying prevention programs we learn that maintaining an informed and trained staff is significant to addressing problems.

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Slide 21

**COLLABORATION**

- This curriculum is intended to be a collaborative piece that allows for school counselors, administrators, and others in the school setting to imagine exciting possibilities of change of a better educational environment for all members of the school.
- Collaboration will be essential, as the school counselors will take on the role of the mediator, who will ensure that the program is being appropriately implemented for the safeguard of the children.

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Slide 22

### ROLE OF THE SCHOOL STAFF

- Staff executing this curriculum will need to constantly collaborate with everyone implementing the curriculum at the school to ensure that all students are being taught the necessary material

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graph TD; SS[School Staff  
(Implementing Curriculum)]; S[Students  
(Receiving Curriculum)]; C[Curriculum  
(Implementing Curriculum)]; RC[Revised Curriculum  
(Revised)]; SS --- S; SS --- C; S --- RC; C --- RC;
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Slide 23

### TOP REASONS TO ACT "TODAY" TO CHANGE, WHILE WORKING AS A TEAM:

- To open the climate for communication
- To work collaboratively to solve challenges
- To appreciate individual differences and strengths
- To trust in the power to change school climate
- To act as leaders
- To have a shared vision
- To envision a safe, inclusive, safe environment
- Think of a positive future
- Make it yours, implement, and see the difference.

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Slide 24

### STEPS TO TAKE

- Reach out to those students who appear to be the victims of bullying, victimization, marginalization, stigmas
- Be proactive about the bullying procedures by:
  - Adopt and implement a no bullying policy.
  - Foster a safe climate/ school environment.
  - Provide reassessment opportunities.

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Slide 25

**COLLABORATION**

The collaboration among staff and interested participants is the first step to create a school environment that is accepting of all students, regardless of disabilities or no disabilities

Imagine a future self facilitating a sense of hope

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Slide 26

**IT STARTS WITH YOU**

- Be proactive
- Identify the need
- Assess your school environment
- Are there incidences of bullying of students with disabilities?
- Do you feel that your school can benefit from bullying prevention curriculums?
- Realize that you are a key player, you are a resource!
- Use school wide questionnaires where you get the input of your students.
- Implement and run curriculums/ programs!

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Slide 27

**INFORMATION IS KNOWLEDGE, BE INFORMED!**

- [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)
- [www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org)
- [www.teen2teens.org](http://www.teen2teens.org)
- [www.copguardonline.gov](http://www.copguardonline.gov)
- [www.humanrelationslausd.net](http://www.humanrelationslausd.net)
- **LAUSD and Bullying:**
- [http://photosbook.lausd.net/portal/page?\\_pageid=33,11245158,-dtd-rll&\\_schema=PTL\\_EP](http://photosbook.lausd.net/portal/page?_pageid=33,11245158,-dtd-rll&_schema=PTL_EP)
- **Tools to use:**
- [http://healthways.courses.santhesa.gov/bullying\\_fs.htm](http://healthways.courses.santhesa.gov/bullying_fs.htm)
- [http://www.stopbullying.gov/community/tip\\_sheets/assessment\\_tools.pdf](http://www.stopbullying.gov/community/tip_sheets/assessment_tools.pdf)

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## **Activity:**

1. What would be the first steps towards creating a safe school environment for your students?
2. What barriers do you feel you would face while trying to create a safe school, bully-free, and inclusive school?
3. Can you identify key players which you can work with and collaborate on Implementing the A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S. curriculum?
4. What is your plan of action, what do you plan to do?

## Appendix B

### **A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S.**

**A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. is an acronym for “Academic Counselors Conducting Educational Preparedness Techniques to Incorporating a Nexus for Guiding Students to Accept, Recognize, and Support Special Students”**

**A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. is a school wide curriculum made up for professionals who seek to emphasize the need for equal treatment and acceptance of individual differences in safe, bully free, and inclusive school settings.**

# Introduction to A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G S.T.A.R.S.S. Curriculum

**Welcome to the A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. curriculum. We are pleased that you are interested in learning more about how to help your students thrive at school.**

**The A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. curriculum is a great opportunity for you to learn more about ways of understanding your students and helping. It starts with you! By being concerned about the safety, academic success, and well being of your students, you are taking the first step at creating a positive and safe school environment.**

**What is A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S.**

**It is a curriculum focused on creating a positive and inclusive school setting where all individuals and student members of the school, are given an equal opportunity to develop their growing autonomy.**

**The A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. curriculum promotes creating a school environment where awareness about disabilities, inclusion, acceptance, recognition, and support of students of this population are treated with integrity. In efforts to create an equal educational opportunity for all the student body it is important. Fostering a bully free and safe space, comprised of students with integrity and respect of individual differences will make a difference in creating a safe school.**

**The A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. curriculum cannot eliminate bullying immediately, it is a progressing change that happens as members of the school adopt and implement it to fit the individual needs of the school.**

*It is suggested that funding for this curriculum be achieved through fundraisers, sponsorship from local community businesses, private companies (i.e. non-profit organizations), interested in funding programs aimed at creating a safe school environment within public school systems.*

School Counselor Philosophy/ Culturally Competent Services  
School Guidance Curriculum – This curriculum consists of structured lessons designed to help students achieve the desired competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge and skills appropriate for their developmental level. The school guidance curriculum is delivered throughout the school's overall curriculum and is systematically presented by professional school counselors in collaboration with other professional educators in K-5 classroom and group activities.  
(ASCA) 2009

## VISION

**Create awareness within schools about  
Disabilities, to promote student acceptance of  
Others while *fostering a safe bully-free space* that shapes  
Students with integrity.**

**I am driven by the simple yet seemingly overconfident idea that every student, no matter how physically, mentally able or disabled, deserves a chance to thrive! I am dedicated to lifting student achievement by promoting acceptance, recognition, and support of positive school and bully free environments.**

A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S. curriculum is exemplary as it promotes collaboration of School Counselors with other professional educators in K-5 classrooms. It is adaptable to the grade level intended.

**First step-School Level**

- **Focusing on targeting the entire school population**
- **Surveying all students using a Likert -Scale questionnaire regarding pre/post knowledge about disabilities and it's correlation to bullying**
- **Opportunity to learn and discuss about disabilities**
- **Opportunity to learn about bullying**
- **Having better supervision of students during recess and lunch**
- **Involving school administrators, staff, and parent partners, at solving problems.**

**Second step- Classroom Level**

- **Targeting all students within the classroom**
- **Create an inclusive environment by encouraging students to develop class rules against bullying**
- **Rules that are enforced within the classroom**

**Third step- Individual Level**

- **Target those students who are or are considered to be the bullies or the victims of bullies.**

## First step-School Level

- **Focusing on targeting the entire school population**
- **Surveying all students using a Likert -Scale questionnaire regarding pre/post knowledge about disabilities and it's correlation to bullying**
- **Opportunity to learn and discuss about bullying**
- **Having better supervision of students during recess and lunch**
- **Involving school administrators, staff, and parent partners, at solving problems.**

**Goal:** Introducing the topic of Bullying

**Materials Needed:**

School gym/ auditorium

LCD projector

Laptop

PowerPoint presentation (Modified Version of A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G  
S.T.A.R.S. workshop PowerPoint modified to fit the school need.

Pre/Post survey questionnaire regarding knowledge about bullying and disabilities

**Procedures:** (Members should sit in a circle with no tables during the PowerPoint presentation)

**Working Time** (Estimated Time: 1 hour):

1. Welcome students to the assembly group session and provide students with a pre survey questionnaire regarding knowledge about bullying and disabilities.
2. Introduction of School Counselor, School Administration, Staff
3. Introduce and review the curriculum's purpose and goals (PowerPoint)
4. Make Students aware that Supervision will take place all around school- identify "hot spots"
5. Give members the Post survey questionnaire.

**Closing Time** (Estimated Time: 5 Minutes):

Give a brief summary of the PowerPoint presentation

## Second step- Classroom Level

- **Targeting all students within the classroom**
- **Create an inclusive environment by encouraging students to develop class rules against bullying**
- **Rules that are enforced within the classroom**

**Goal:** Target students at the classroom level and work with them in creating rules for the classroom against bullying of children with disabilities, and other children who are victimized.

### **Materials Needed:**

3 white pieces of big note pad paper (or as needed)  
Markers

**Procedures:** Have students sit at the reading rug or at their seat depending on the grade level and introduce the day's lesson. Remind them of the school assembly about bullying and enthusiastically encouraging students to develop class rules against bullying. Rules that are enforced within the

### **Working Time** (Estimated Time: 1 hour):

1. Review the material from the assembly with your students.
2. Ask them to think of a time when someone has said negative things to them because of how they looked what they wore (whatever the situation may be), teased them, hit them, or threatened them.
3. Ask them how they felt, (they don't have to share specifics).
4. Ask them to think of a time when they said negative things to someone, teased them, hit them, or threatened them.
5. Ask them how they felt, (they don't have to share specifics)
6. Now after they have shared, talk about how at times others make negative remarks and hurt one's feelings. Emphasize that it doesn't feel good. Tell the students that they can make a difference.
7. Introduce the activity of making classroom rules against bullying of children with disabilities.

### **Closing Time** (Estimated Time: 5 Minutes):

Give a brief summary of the rules that the students came up with and emphasize that you are proud of them for doing such a great job. Remind them that the rules are to be followed, and that no one should be made fun of or bullied.

### **Third step- Individual Level**

- **Target those students who are or are considered to be the bullies or the victims of bullies.**

**Goal:** Target students at the individual level by having serious talks with bullies and victims, serious talks with the parents of students involved, as well as using creative solutions to resolve the solution.

#### **Materials Needed:**

Office room/classroom  
No bullying contracts

**Procedures:** Meet with the students individually without letting the other one know in efforts to avoid creating additional conflicts. Meet with parents of the specific student.

**Working Time** (Estimated Time: depending on student)

1. Meet with the individual and discuss scenario/event.
2. Meet with the parent of the specific student and address the scenario/event. and provide them support.

**Closing Time** (Estimated Time: depending on scenario/event conversation):

Give a brief summary of the discussed scenario/event, and solution identified. Thank them for their cooperation and remind them of the contract.



**A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S Workshop Pre-Questionnaire**

Disagree (0-2)  
Agree (3-5)

*(Circle One)*

- never.....0
- almost never.....1
- rarely.....2
- often.....3
- almost always.....4
- always.....5

**Self Evaluation and Awareness Questionnaire**

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <i>Knowledge:</i>   | <u>0 1 2 3 4 5</u> |
| Do you believe that bullying is a problem at your school?                   | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| Do you know what a disability is?   | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| Do you think that students with disabilities are treated equally at school? | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| Do you know someone with a disability?                                      | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| <i>Feelings:</i>  | <u>0 1 2 3 4 5</u> |
| Do you feel that your school is safe?                                       | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| Do you feel that your school is an inclusive setting?                       | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| Do you feel that your school is bully free?                                 | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |

**A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S Workshop Post-Questionnaire**

Disagree (0-2)  
Agree (3-5)

*(Circle One)*

- never.....0
- almost never.....1
- rarely.....2
- often.....3
- almost always.....4
- always.....5

**Self Evaluation and Awareness Questionnaire**

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <i>Knowledge:</i>   | <u>0 1 2 3 4 5</u> |
| Do you believe that bullying is a problem at your school?                   | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| Do you know what a disability is?   | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| Do you think that students with disabilities are treated equally at school? | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| Do you know someone with a disability?                                      | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| <i>Feelings:</i>  | <u>0 1 2 3 4 5</u> |
| Do you feel that your school is safe?                                       | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| Do you feel that your school is an inclusive setting?                       | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |
| Do you feel that your school is bully free?                                 | 0 1 2 3 4 5        |

**A.C.C.E.P.T.I.N.G. S.T.A.R.S.S**

**NO bullying Contract**

**Student Initials**

I promise to follow the rules at school

\_\_\_\_\_

I promise to follow the rules in my classroom

\_\_\_\_\_

I will treat everyone with respect

\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_