

A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF A TEAM-BASED INSTITUTE MODEL OF  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BULLYING PREVENTION

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## ABSTRACT

Professional development has been thoroughly researched in the areas of teacher effectiveness and academic instruction. Far less research has been completed to assess the elements of effective professional development as it pertains to prevention programming, whole-school change, and the training of non-teaching staff (e.g., mental health professionals). The current study evaluated participant perceptions of the Bullying Prevention Institute (BPI), a team-based, institute style professional development program. The 2011-2012 pilot year of BPI provided training to school districts in the areas of the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act, bullying prevention, bullying intervention, and the school-change process. To accomplish this training, BPI's approach contained previously identified elements of effective professional development programs. Data came from thematic analysis of interviews conducted with a subset of Anti-Bullying Coordinators (ABCs) as well as through survey measures which were open to all BPI participants. Participants provided feedback on the structure, content, and overall impact of program activities. Participants identified year-long duration, frequent and on-going contact, consultation, and working in teams (both within and across school districts) as beneficial elements in the structure of BPI. Participants also reported that they benefitted from active learning opportunities, material that was aligned with state standards, and content that was relevant, meaningful, and specific. They also found it helpful to work towards an identified goal: the creation of a comprehensive bullying prevention plan. Following participation in BPI, ABCs reported implementing aspects of their bullying prevention plans, as well as intent to implement additional aspects of their plans in the future. ABCs also reported that participation in BPI had led, in part, to changes in their school or district's climate. Increased knowledge in the areas of bullying

prevention, bullying intervention, and the school-change process were also reported.

These findings confirm previous results related to the elements of effective professional development, and they show that these elements are also effective in training non-teaching staff and in the content area of prevention programming. Implications for the development of future training programs are also discussed.

*Keywords:* professional development, bullying prevention

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Context for the Training Program.....	1
Rutgers Bullying Prevention Institute.....	2
Types of Professional Development .....	3
Elements of Effective Professional Development .....	5
Elements of Effective Professional Development and the BPI Approach ....	8
Purpose of the Study .....	9
Research Questions .....	10
Hypotheses .....	10
METHOD .....	11
Participants .....	11
Data Sources .....	12
Procedure.....	15
RESULTS .....	17
District Demographic Data.....	17
Plan Completion .....	18
General Reactions to BPI .....	18
Interviewed District Profiles.....	21

ABC Interview Data.....	22
DISCUSSION .....	31
Benefits of the BPI Program.....	32
BPI Program Impacts .....	37
Limitations of the BPI Program.....	39
Implications for Practice .....	43
Study Limitations.....	46
Future Directions .....	50
Summary .....	51
REFERENCES.....	53
APPENDICES.....	58
A. BPI Plan Evaluation Checklist.....	58
B. End-of-Year Survey .....	62
C. Interview Protocol.....	65
D. Thematic Codes.....	67

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 District Demographics ..... 53

# A Preliminary Evaluation of a Team-Based Institute Model of Professional Development in Bullying Prevention

## **Introduction**

Professional development of educational professionals has been described as “essential to efforts to improve our schools” (Borko, 2004). Professional development is, according to Hassel (1999), “the process of improving staff skills and competencies needed to produce outstanding educational results for students.” While a great deal of focus has been placed on improving teacher practice in the classroom, these same sentiments can and should be extended to the mental health of students (Kratochwill, Volpiansky, Clements & Ball, 2007). There is perhaps no issue more pressing for schools in the mental health of their students than bullying. Research in the field of bullying prevention has expanded tremendously in recent years, while knowledge and best practices in the field are quickly evolving (Hong & Garbarino, 2012; Sampson, 2009; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). One major finding through this research has been the need for school climate change and whole-school reform (Olweus, 1993; Olweus, Limber & Mahalic, 1999). Professional development can serve as a keystone of whole-school reform and school-change activities (Borko, 2004; Kratochwill et al., 2007). It is therefore necessary to identify models of professional development that can effectively address district anti-bullying efforts to positively impact the mental health of students.

## **Context for the Training Program**

Beginning September 1, 2011, the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act went into effect. The Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (ABR) includes a stringent set of requirements for school districts to follow which include guidelines on reporting,



investigating, and responding to incidents of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB). The goal of the ABR is to reduce incidents of HIB in New Jersey schools, as well as to positively impact school climate, which has been shown to be effective in reducing HIB in schools (Cerf, Hespe, Gantwerk, Martz, & Vermeire, 2011; Olweus, 1993; Olweus, Limber & Mahalic, 1999).

One of the new requirements of the ABR is that all district employees, from the superintendent and board members to teachers and contracted service providers, must receive professional development in the areas of bullying and suicide prevention (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-24). Specifically, the law requires at least two hours of professional development in the areas of bullying and suicide prevention per professional development cycle (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-24).

### **Rutgers Bullying Prevention Institute**

The 2011-2012 school year constituted the pilot implementation of the Rutgers Bullying Prevention Institute (BPI). BPI was created prior to the onset of the ABR and was created to respond to the needs of school districts in New Jersey to have coherent, integrative, and district-wide approaches to preventing and intervening in HIB and school climate issues. The primary product of work with BPI is the creation of comprehensive anti-bullying plans which encompass identified elements necessary for success and district-wide change (e.g., identifying needs, selecting prevention strategies, addressing implementation, evaluating outcomes), with the intention of aiding school districts throughout the state of New Jersey to effectively handle incidents of HIB and improve school climate. BPI also intends for these plans to be complete to the point that they

could be presented to district Boards of Education for approval and implementation, should the district so desire.

The Bullying Prevention Institute is a year-long, team-based training model in which participating school districts select members to comprise a Bullying Prevention Leadership Team (BPLT). These teams are comprised of administrators, teachers, parents, mental health workers, and community members. Teams can range in size from three to seven members. Participation in BPI, for the pilot year, involved attendance at four full-day workshops which covered content areas related to bullying and the creation of a comprehensive, district-wide anti-bullying plan. Furthermore, each district was assigned a BPI consultant who met with BPLTs in-between workshop sessions to provide technical assistance, consultation on district-specific issues, to answer questions, and ensure that BPLTs were working effectively together towards the goal of creating their district-wide plan.

### **Types of Professional Development**

A great deal of research has been conducted regarding improving teacher practice through professional development (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Fishman, Marx, Best & Tal, 2003; Porter et al., 2001; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Previous studies have primarily focused on improving academic outcomes for students as well as on improving content-specific instruction in teachers. Though it has been recognized as an important element of ensuring positive mental health outcomes for students, far fewer inquiries have been made in to the area of professional development with regards to the social-emotional functioning of students, school climate improvement, and bullying (Kratochwill et al., 2007). Even in terms of academic outcomes, a vast majority of

professional development programs have been found to be ineffective (Guskey, 2002). It has been hypothesized that many professional development programs are ineffective because they do not account for teacher motivation to engage in professional development and do not account for the gradual process of teacher change. For instance, those who engage in professional development, typically define success in terms of the “other” (e.g., success and positive outcomes for students, classes) rather than in terms of the self (e.g., growth, personal effectiveness). Despite these failings however, numerous key elements of effective professional development, regardless of content area, have been identified. These include, but are not limited to, the need for gradual and progressive change, the need for regular feedback on professional practice, and the need for follow-up and professional support (Guskey, 2002; Landry et al., 2009; Porter et al., 2001).

There are a large number of different models and permutations of professional development that have been documented and researched (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). These models include, but are not limited to: workshops, institutes, professional learning communities, shadowing other professionals, study groups, and systematic reflection (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002; Kratochwill, Volpiansky, Clements & Ball, 2007). These approaches have been identified as comprising two major categories of professional development programs: traditional professional development and reform programs. Workshops and some institutes comprise “traditional” professional development and typically involve either an existing staff member or outside consultant with expertise delivering content material to other staff outside of the school or classroom. “Reform” types of professional development include study groups, systematic reflection, and mentoring, among other activities. These approaches tend to take place during the school

day or within the classroom and are believed to be more individualized or “responsive” to teacher’s changing professional needs. It should be noted that many professional development programs are often an amalgam of many different types of activities, and clear distinctions between whether a program is “traditional” or “reform” can often be difficult to discern (Birman et al., 2000; Fenwick & Pierce, 2002; Porter et al., 2001).

For many in the field of education, “traditional” professional development has meant half or full-day workshops with little to no follow-up, which are typically conducted by a fellow staff member or outside consultant (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Borko, 2004; Porter et al., 2001). This approach has been described as “woefully inadequate,” as well as “fragmented,” and “intellectually superficial” (Borko, 2004). Furthermore, others have stated that such types of professional development are “ineffective due to short duration, low intellectual level, poor focus, and little substantive research-based content.” These types of professional development are also “implemented from the top-down... lack follow-up, neglect teacher concerns, and neglect connections to challenges teachers face” (Kent, 2004).

### **Elements of Effective Professional Development**

Based on a large-scale national survey of teachers participating in federally-funded professional development programs, Porter, Garet, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) have identified numerous elements of professional development that impact teacher outcomes, implementation, and student learning. The framework put forth by Porter and colleagues (2001) has been used with whole-school change models and professional development in the areas of mental health and special education, specifically

with regard to Response to Intervention (Danielson, Doolittle & Bradley, 2007; Kratochwill et al., 2007).

The features of professional development identified by Porter and colleagues (2001) fall into two major categories: core features and structural features. Core features are “characteristic of the substance of [an] activity,” that is to say that they reflect the content of PD activities (Desimone et. al, 2002; Porter et al., 2001). The core features of professional development identified as leading to reported increases in teacher knowledge and changes in classroom functioning include: a focus on content knowledge, the opportunity for active learning, and the coherence of learning activities towards an identified goal. Specifically, it was found that professional development focused on specific, subject-based content led to more changes in classroom practices. Changes in classroom practice were also positively impacted by opportunities for active learning (e.g., observations, planning, presenting, reflecting), as well as content that built on existing knowledge and were aligned with state standards or requirements (Porter et al., 2001).

Other elements of effective PD are structural in nature. Structural features are “characteristic of the structure of a professional development activity” (Desimone et. al, 2002; Porter et al., 2001). The structural features of professional development found to impact teacher’s knowledge and functioning in the classroom include: the types of activities in the program (e.g., reform vs. traditional), duration, and participation in grouping by similar profession or role (e.g., grouping by school or grade level). It was found that reform activities have a small, positive effect when compared to traditional professional development. Not surprisingly, it was also found that longer duration, both

in number of hours spent in direct professional development, as well as the entire span of the program (e.g., over months/years) led to increases in teacher knowledge and perceived effectiveness in the classroom. Finally, professional development activities that group staff from similar settings (e.g., schools, grades, subjects) were found to be more effective in transmitting knowledge and leading to positive change in the classroom (Birman, Desimone, Porter & Garet, 2000; Porter et al., 2001).

Landry and colleagues (2009) conducted a study of various combinations of different elements of professional development with new teachers of at-risk preschool students. In this study, a 2x2 design with a control group was utilized to ascertain what elements of the professional development program lead to the greatest gains and changes in teacher behavior. Specifically, Landry et al. (2009) looked at the impact of, and interactions between, the elements of mentoring and progress monitoring/feedback. Trained facilitators, who were themselves experienced teachers, provided mentoring as well as written feedback on classroom and teacher variables. Progress monitoring utilized curriculum based measures (CBMs) to assess student progress and to provide feedback on how students were progressing in key academic areas. This feedback also provided specific strategies and activities based on a standardized teaching strategy manual. On top of these supports, all teachers received an online set of voluntary courses, focusing on topics such as classroom management, letter knowledge, and phonological awareness. Researchers found that the greatest gains in understanding and positive teacher practices occurred for those teachers who received the most comprehensive professional development program, including the year-long course on teaching practices, classroom mentoring, and progress monitoring with immediate,

instructionally-relevant feedback. Both quality of teaching methods and frequency in terms of use of these methods and strategies were seen to increase when the comprehensive professional development approach was utilized. Mixed results were found for mentoring alone and progress-monitoring alone, indicating the need for comprehensive, multi-faceted professional development. This seems to be particularly true for new professionals and when teaching new content areas. This is relevant to the current research as the content area of bullying and school climate change are new to most school administrators and mental health professionals, as positions such as that of the Anti-Bullying Coordinator and Anti-Bullying Specialist did not exist prior to the 2011-2012 school implementation of the ABR (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-24).

### **Elements of Effective Professional Development and the BPI Approach**

Numerous, but certainly not all, of the elements identified by Porter and colleagues (2001) were present in the pilot-year BPI training program. Of the core elements noted above, BPI had a focus on specific content knowledge related to bullying, as well as specific information regarding the school-change process. For instance, participants were provided with, and walked through, workbooks, activities, and checklists for the various components of their comprehensive bullying prevention plans. There were also opportunities for active learning in BPI workshops and consultations, as at various times participants planned activities, presented to others, reflected on their own practice, and shared best practices, among other things. BPI was also aligned with the ABR in terms of assisting districts to implement the law. Successive workshops and consultation sessions built on previously acquired information and previous activities.

With regard to the structural components of effective professional development identified above, BPI represented a mix of both traditional and reform elements, in that it contained both off-site workshops as well as on-site consultation with BPLT members. The duration, both in terms of contact hours and span, was also longer than “professional development as usual.” As noted previously, BPI involvement consisted of four full-day workshops which occurred between October and May, as well as numerous on-site consultation sessions, which varied in terms of direct contact hours but occurred between November and June. Finally, members of the BPLT from each district were from various school settings throughout the district (i.e., not all from the same setting) and represented various roles within the school community (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents, community members). Each team was also required to contain the district ABC as well as at least one ABS to represent the new roles created by the ABR. This was done purposefully by BPI to have a representative group of stakeholders as active members in decision-making for the district-wide bullying prevention plan.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the this investigation was to determine whether participants in the 2011-2012 pilot year of the Bullying Prevention Institute perceived the professional development activities of BPI as beneficial and effective. Specifically, we sought to determine whether or not participants viewed the core and structural components of effective professional development, as stated by Porter and colleagues (2001), as beneficial to their experience with BPI. Furthermore, we sought to determine if districts were able to successfully create a comprehensive anti-bullying plan for their district, as well as if they perceived themselves as being able to effectively implement this plan.



Finally, we investigated whether or not teams felt efficacious in their ability to bring about positive change in the area of bullying prevention in their districts, through their involvement in BPI.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does the institute model of professional development used by the Bullying Prevention Institute (BPI) differ from other professional development activities completed by member districts?
2. What, if any, benefits do participants perceive BPI to have over other types of professional development they have used?
  - a. What core and structural elements of effective professional development do participants perceive as having added benefit over typical professional development activities?
3. What, if any, limitations do participants perceive BPI to have over other types of professional development they have used?
4. Do program participants believe that they will be able to successfully implement comprehensive bullying plans? If not, why?
  - a. What do participants see as the obstacles to implementation?
5. Do participants believe that their participation in BPI will lead to changes in school practices and school climate? If not, why?
6. Do participants believe that participating in BPI significantly enhanced their knowledge of bullying prevention, intervention, and the school-change process?

### **Hypotheses**

1. Participants will describe BPI as different in several ways from “typical” professional development (PD), particularly in the areas of length and time spent in contact with PD activities, the structure of the program, and the depth of material covered.
2. Participants will view BPI as having several benefits over other PD activities in which they have participated. The benefits of BPI identified by district ABCs are anticipated to be related to the core and structural elements of effective professional development, including the use of a team-based approach, increased contact with the program, the impact of consultation, as well as sharing information between districts, both formally and informally.
3. Participants will note limitations to the design, including various elements of workshops, consultations, and workshop materials. Specific limitations are expected to be idiosyncratic to districts.
4. Participants will perceive themselves as being able to be successful in plan implementation.
5. Participants will feel that involvement with BPI led to changes in school practices and functioning.
6. Finally, it is anticipated that participants will perceive their interaction and involvement in BPI as having significantly enhanced their knowledge in the areas of bullying prevention, intervention, and the school change process.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants involved in this study included all members of school district Bullying Prevention Leadership Teams (BPLTs) who participated in one or more activities throughout the course of the 2011-2012 pilot year of BPI (n=86). These participants volunteered to participate in BPI through their school districts and represented a variety of stakeholder groups, including administrators, teachers, mental health professionals, parents, and community members. Districts were originally chosen for BPI through an application process following a mailing to all school districts (public and charter) within the state of New Jersey. District selection was completed independent of the current investigation.

The leader of each BPLT was the school district's Anti-Bullying Coordinator (ABC). The ABC was responsible for coordinating team activities, ensuring that BPI activities were completed, as well as to be the team leader in meetings with BPI consultants. This reflected the role of the ABC set forth in the ABR. In the ABR, ABCs have a significant role in coordinating building and district-level activities as well as overseeing ABSs and other staff. Related to this, ABSs also have coordinating responsibilities (i.e., chairing a School Safety Team to address HIB in their particular school building). The ABC, in a vast majority of cases (92%), was represented by a school district administrator.

### **Data Sources**

**Workshop evaluations.** Data were collected throughout the year as part of BPI program activities. Following each workshop, participants completed evaluation forms

regarding the relevance of workshop activities, quality of the presentation, and quality of workshop materials. These evaluation forms consisted of both Likert-type scale items as well as open-ended responses.

BPI participants were asked to complete a short feedback survey at the conclusion of each workshop. Participants were asked to rate the overall quality of the workshop on a four-point scale (1-Poor, 2-Average, 3-Good, 4-Excellent) as well as the relevance of each topic covered on a four-point scale (1-Not at all relevant to 4-Highly Relevant). Participants rated the effectiveness of workshop activities on a similar four-point scale (1-Not at all effective to 4-Highly effective). Participants were also asked the degree to which they agreed with several statements related to the process and structure of the workshop. These statements included: (1) Information was clear and concise, (2) Information presented was relevant to my job/role in the BPLT, and (3) Presentations were well-paced and enough time was paid to each topic. These questions were rated on a five-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree).

Participants were also asked to complete several open-ended questions related to the workshop. These questions included: (1) What did you find most useful about today's workshop? (2) What did you find least useful about today's workshop?, (3) What questions, if any, do you still have about any content areas covered?, and (4) What would you like to see addressed at future sessions?

**Bullying prevention plan evaluation.** All districts completed a comprehensive bullying prevention plan as part of the BPI program. The comprehensive bullying prevention plan was based on topics learned throughout training (e.g., needs assessment, selection of programs and interventions, implementation, evaluation). A rubric (see

Appendix A) was used in order to determine whether or not elements of nine separate content areas are represented by the plan. The purpose of the “present/not present” dichotomization in the rubric was to minimize subjective judgments regarding the quality of different elements of the plan.

**End-of-year survey.** Participants completed an on-line survey as a part of their participation in BPI. The survey was completed in early June 2012, following the completion of the fourth and final BPI workshop. The survey (see Appendix B), assessed multiple areas, including satisfaction with BPI in general, satisfaction with training activities, satisfaction with workshop and consultation materials, as well as satisfaction with consultants/consultations. The survey also asked questions regarding team functioning and perceptions about the effectiveness of team-building activities. Finally, the survey asked participants their perceptions of the quality of their plan, their confidence in their ability to implement their plan, and their expectations of success in achieving team goals. Participants rated the degree with which they agreed with statements on a five-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree).

**ABC/team leader interviews.** The final component of data collection was structured interviews with the Anti-Bullying Coordinator (ABC) from select member districts. In all cases, the district ABC was the team leader and primary contact between district BPLTs and the BPI. ABCs were selected to be interviewed based on the completeness of their district’s anti-bullying prevention plan (e.g., those districts with very complete plans or plans that were very incomplete were chosen). The areas assessed by the interview included: other professional development undertaken by the district in regard to bullying and/or school climate, comparing BPI to other professional

development completed by the district, perceived benefits of the six core and structural elements described above (e.g., duration, team-based approach), BPI's ability to assist the district in meeting legal requirements, as well as perceptions of plan quality, knowledge gained through professional development, and likelihood of implementation and success. Considering that the 2011-2012 cohort of BPI districts represents the pilot year of the project, no implementation or outcome data were available at the time of the interviews. Therefore, the final component of the interview (perception of implementation and perceived likelihood of success) will serve as a measure of effectiveness of professional development. This type of self-report is similar to the procedure used by Porter and colleagues (2001), in which they asked teachers to self-report whether or not professional development activities had changed teachers' instructional practices and content knowledge. See the interview protocol in Appendix C. The interviewer was known to all interviewees, as he had served as a consultant during the 2011-2012 pilot year of BPI.

### **Procedure**

All workshop and consultation evaluation data, as well as end-of-year survey data were completed by member districts prior to the beginning of this research project. All workshop, survey and consultation data were collected by June 1, 2012. Comprehensive anti-bullying plans were assessed using the rubric mentioned above at the fourth workshop session (May 22, 2012). Plan rubrics, workshop and consultation evaluations, and the end-of-year survey data were available as part of a permanent product review.

Districts were informed of the possibility of being contacted to participate in an additional interview as part of the research project at the fourth BPI workshop session. Districts were selected for participation based on the completeness of their

comprehensive anti-bullying plans. District plans were ranked based on percentage of elements evident in their plan presentation. The two districts whose plans were least complete as well as the two districts whose plans were most complete were invited to participate. This criterion was chosen to gain a more thorough understanding of what characteristics or factors may have aided or impeded districts in completing their plans. The district team whose plan was least complete declined to be interviewed as part of this investigation. Another district whose plan was determined to be less complete was chosen to be interviewed in the place of the declining district. Therefore, a total of four in-depth interviews were conducted based on the interview protocol (see Appendix C). All interviews were conducted on-site in each interviewee's district. Interviewees were not aware of their ranking or plan completeness at any point during the interview process.

**Workshop evaluation forms.** Data from workshop evaluation forms consisted of responses to the Likert-type scale items and were collected prior to this investigation. Means and standard deviations were derived from survey results

**Bullying prevention plan completion.** The comprehensive anti-bullying plans created by each district were assessed by percentage of completion based on the total number of items marked as "evident/complete" over the total number of items in the rubric (Appendix A). This procedure was used to identify the districts that were approached to complete the additional ABC interview (noted above). Percentages of completion across districts was analyzed from the rubrics.

**Thematic analysis procedure.** All ABC interviews were conducted by the primary evaluator based on the interview protocol (Appendix C). Interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes and responses.

The thematic analysis conducted as part of the current research proposal followed the procedure and guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The procedure put forth by Braun and Clarke creates a process for deriving and interpreting themes from interview data. Such a procedure has often been overlooked and thematic analysis has often served as a global, amorphous term. In the case of this study, thematic analysis entailed multiple steps. The first step was to read and re-read over the entire data set in an active manner such that potential themes and patterns were sought. The second step was to determine a list of codes which were identified in the narrative data. These codes were based on common elements, phrases, or interesting aspects of the interviews. After all the data were coded, codes were collapsed onto common themes. These themes were determined based on the outcomes of coding the data. These themes are intended to be broader and more global in nature than the codes. Following determination of an initial list of themes, themes were collapsed onto “meta-themes” which encompassed multiple related themes. A complete list of general and meta-themes can be found in Appendix D. This process was iterative in nature; therefore a revisiting of earlier steps was necessary at times.

## **Results**

### **District Demographic Data**

Participating districts were asked to self-report information including current enrollment, geographic location (i.e., Northern, Central, or Southern New Jersey), setting (i.e., urban, suburban, rural), grades taught (e.g., K-12, Pre-K-6), and district factor group (DFG) as part of the BPI application process. DFGs were originally established by the New Jersey Department of Education to determine and establish districts to receive



Abbott funding. The DFG classification serves as an approximation of the district's socioeconomic status (SES) and takes into account factors such as family income, poverty rate, adult education levels, and rates of unemployment (NJDOE, 2004). DFGs are categorized by letter, with A representing districts with the lowest SES category while J represents districts with the highest SES. Middle categories often contain two letter names, such as CD, DE, FG, and GH factor groups. For a full list of demographic data from all districts, please see table 1.

### **Plan Completion**

All participating districts presented their plans in the form of a PowerPoint presentation at the fourth and final BPI workshop. At that time plans were graded by BPI staff based on completeness using the rubric in Appendix A. The average completion of the comprehensive bullying prevention plan was found to be 72%, with a range of 37%-97% and a median of 75%. Please see table 1 for the complete list of plan completion percentages by district.

### **General Reactions to BPI**

**Workshop feedback surveys.** The number of participants who completed feedback surveys at the end of each workshop varied over the course of the year. Sixty-seven participants attended the first workshop, of which 55 (82%) completed a feedback survey. For the second workshop, 58 participants attended and 46 (79%) completed workshop feedback forms. The third workshop saw a lower response rate, as 57 participants attended and 33 (58%) completed feedback forms. Fifty-four participants attended the final workshop, of which 24 (44%) completed a workshop feedback survey.

Survey responses declined over the course of the year, possibly due to lack of interest, lack of investment or other reasons.

Participants rated the overall workshop quality between “good” and “excellent” ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=.28$ ) and the overall ratings were not found to be different across workshops ( $t=.28$ ,  $p=.84$ ). The ratings of the relevance of various workshop content areas were rated between “mostly relevant” and “highly relevant” ( $M=3.41$ ,  $SD=.09$ ) and ratings of content relevance were consistent across workshops ( $t=0$ ,  $p=1$ ). Participants also rated the presentation of materials highly ( $M=4.20$ ,  $SD=.23$ ). Ratings were again found to be consistent across workshops ( $t=.10$ ,  $p=.93$ ). Workshop activities were rated in the “mostly effective” to “extremely effective” range ( $M=3.23$ ,  $SD=.25$ ) and average ratings were found to be consistent across workshops ( $t=.51$ ,  $p=.70$ ).

**End-of-year survey.** All 86 participants that had been involved in any capacity with BPI during the 2011-2012 year were sent a link to complete the end-of-year survey. Of this group, thirty-five BPI participants (41%) completed the voluntary, online survey in June of 2012, following completion of the final BPI workshop.

**Program services.** Respondents indicated that they found the experience of participating in BPI valuable ( $M=4.21$ ,  $SD=0.98$ ). BPI staff members were rated as being effective at delivering content and materials at workshop sessions ( $M=4.35$ ,  $SD=0.69$ ). Workshops were reported to be interactive and engaging ( $M=4.24$ ,  $SD=0.70$ ). Participants agreed less strongly that participating in BPI increased their knowledge related to bullying prevention ( $M=4.03$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ). Participants felt that BPI training workshops increased their BPLT’s ability to create a comprehensive bullying plan ( $M=4.24$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ). Materials provided were also rated as being practical tools in the

development of the bullying prevention plan ( $M=4.33$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ). Workshops were reported by participants to have been conveniently spaced throughout the year ( $M=4.18$ ,  $SD=0.67$ ). Participants agreed, slightly less strongly, that on-site consultations were helpful in facilitating progress between workshops ( $M=4.09$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ). Despite this, districts reported that their BPI consultant was effective in addressing specific district needs ( $M=4.21$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ).

***Team experience.*** Participants agreed that their BPLT was representative of their district ( $M=4.24$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ). Participants' ratings were less strong when asked if all team members had an active role in developing their plan ( $M=3.97$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ). Ratings indicated that team members communicated regularly between BPI activities ( $M=4.26$ ,  $SD=0.90$ ) and that BPLT members made effective group decisions during plan developments ( $M=4.32$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ). Districts generally indicated that they would continue to meet with their BPLT during the year following their involvement with BPI ( $M=4.33$ ,  $SD=0.82$ ).

***Products and outcomes.*** BPLT members rated that they believed they had developed a quality bullying prevention plan as a result of BPI participation ( $M=4.06$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ). Participants also believed that they would present their plan to their local Boards of Education ( $M=4.06$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ). Members expressed confidence in the likelihood of implementing their bullying prevention plan ( $M=4.21$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ). Participants agreed less when asked if they planned to provide recommendations for changing their district HIB policy ( $M=3.61$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ). This statement was rated lowest among all items administered. Finally, respondents felt strongly that their bullying

prevention efforts would have a positive impact on school climate in their district (M=4.44, SD=0.72). This item was rated highest among all those administered.

### **Interviewed District Profiles**

Four district ABCs were interviewed as per the procedures outlined previously. What follows is a brief description of each district and the completeness of their BPI plan. Districts have been assigned letter names to protect the confidentiality of participating ABCs.

**District A.** District A was a special services school district from southern New Jersey serving grades K-12. District A self-reported as rural and did not list a DFG, as it serves students from a wide array of sending districts. Enrollment at the time of District A's application was 277 students, making it the smallest of the four districts interviewed in terms of enrollment. District A attended all four workshops and participated in four consultation sessions. District A produced a plan that was 88.57% complete based on the criteria noted in Appendix A. Items not accounted for in the district plan included the creation of relevant SMART goals, a method for using the plan to inform district policy, a plan for long-term evaluation of outcomes, and seeking out funding for continuing activities.

**District B.** District B was a K-12 public school district in northern New Jersey. District B was reported to be suburban and to be categorized by the DFG as GH. Enrollment at the time of application was 1,572 students. District B attended all four workshops and participated in two consultations sessions. District B produced a plan that was 37.14% complete. A number of areas were not accounted for including, but not limited to, assessment of school climate and a breakdown of needs assessment data, the

selection of evidence-based strategies, identification of specific intervention strategies, a plan for implementation of programs, and a plan for the evaluation of process, outcome, and long-term effects of plan components.

**District C.** District C was a Pre-K-8 public school district in central New Jersey. District C self-reported being a suburban district and was categorized with a DFG of GH. Enrollment at the time of application was 5,165 students. District C attended all four workshops and participated in four consultation sessions. District C produced a bullying prevention plan that was 91.43% complete. This was the highest score of all districts interviewed. The elements of the plan not accounted for included: not presenting a plan for acquiring additional funding if needed, not presenting a plan for communicating results of the district needs assessment survey, and not explaining how their bullying prevention plan would help inform district policy.

**District D.** District D was a Pre-K-12 public school district from southern New Jersey. District D was reported to be a suburban district and was categorized with a DFG of DE. Enrollment at the time of application was 1,572 students. District D participated in all four workshops and two consultation sessions. District D produced a bullying prevention plan that was 71.43% complete. Elements not accounted for in its' plan included, but were not limited to: a plan to communicate results to relevant stakeholders, the explanation of an evidence-base for selected prevention strategies, the inclusion of specific intervention strategies, and a plan for long-term evaluation of outcomes.

### **ABC Interview Data**

A number of hypotheses were the subject of investigation through the ABC interviews in areas related to the differences between BPI and other PD activities,

perceived benefits of BPI due to structural and core elements, limitations of BPI due to structural and core elements, as well as perceived outcomes (i.e., ability to successfully implement a bullying prevention plan, ability to affect change in school practices and school climate, and enhanced knowledge in covered content areas).

**Differences between BPI and other PD activities.** It was anticipated that ABCs would identify BPI as different from typical PD activities in terms of contact time, structure (institute-style approach), and depth of material covered. Interviewed ABCs identified that BPI was structurally different than other professional development activities they had engaged in related to Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB). Other types of professional development in the area of HIB noted by participants included one-day conferences (50%), staff in-service trainings (100%), legal trainings held by outside law firms (50%) and involvement with an outside ongoing character education program (25%).

Elements noted as being different in BPI included a greater number and longer duration of workshops (100%), more networking with other schools (75%), and the devotion of time to developing a plan to use following program completion (75%). All ABCs interviewed reported that they had a positive experience working with BPI.

Interview data support the hypothesis that ABCs viewed BPI as different from PD “as usual” and saw the institute-style of delivery as separate from in-service trainings, one-day conferences, etc. Data also supported the hypothesis that core and structural elements would be noted as being different in BPI when compared to other PD activities (e.g., greater number and duration of workshops, types of activities).

**Benefits of BPI over other types of PD.** It was hypothesized that participants would view BPI as having a number of benefits over traditional PD activities, particularly in terms of core and structural elements. ABC interview data supports the hypothesis that structural elements of BPI would be viewed as beneficial by program participants. This held true for all elements, including: length and duration of contact, consultation, working as a team, and collaborating with professionals from other districts. Some general benefits of the BPI program were also reported. General benefits of the BPI program noted by ABCs included that BPI gave more resources than other workshops (75%), was more comprehensive than other workshops (75%), and had keynote speakers that were of additional benefit (100%). Participants also found having workshops held outside of their district to be helpful (100%) and several reported that being able to spend travel time to and from workshops with colleagues was helpful in planning and debriefing (75%). Half of those interviewed reported that the focus of BPI on climate change instead of just legal concerns was helpful.

***Benefits of structural features.*** It was anticipated that participants would view some structural elements of BPI as beneficial, including a year-long duration, increased face-to-face contact, consultation, a team-based approach, and the ability to share information between districts. With regard to program structure, 100% of ABCs interviewed reported that the year-long duration (e.g., “You can’t get all that info in one day,” “You get to come back and ask questions”) and having workshops spaced out throughout the year (e.g., “It kept you focused on topics throughout the year”) was helpful. Respondents to the end-of-year survey concurred that workshops were conveniently spaced throughout the year ( $M=4.18$ ,  $SD=0.67$ ). Consultation was also

reported to be helpful (75%) (e.g., “It really coached us through,” “I don’t think we would have been as effective...without [our consultant]”), as was the amount of face-time with BPI staff (75%). This is consistent with the end-of year survey results, which indicated that on-site consultations were helpful in facilitating between-workshop progress ( $M=4.09$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ).

Of specific benefit in the area of structural features was the ability to work both as a district team, as well as with teams from other school districts. This emerged as a key element of BPI as identified by the ABCs interviewed. ABCs reported that the ability to work and learn with team members, other BPI teams, and BPI staff helped their teams learn more and to develop a more comprehensive bullying prevention plan. They found both working as a district team helpful (100%) (e.g., “We were more than the sum of our parts,” “One person could not possibly do what we did as a team”) and collaborating with peers from other districts helpful (100%) (e.g., “We made great connections with other districts,” “There were more schools and more people to learn from and share with”).

***Benefits of core features.*** A number of core features of BPI were also hypothesized to be beneficial. These core elements included the impact of workshop content (i.e., relevant, specific, meaningful in daily work), alignment of content with state standards, and building on previously acquired knowledge. Core features of workshop activities were also hypothesized to be beneficial, including having engaging and interactive activities, and working towards a known goal (i.e., the completion of a district bullying prevention plan). ABC interview results support these hypotheses, as participants found all identified core elements as being of benefit in their PD experience.



Participants reported that the content of BPI workshops was relevant and specific to their work (75%) (e.g., “There was a wide enough range of content”), that the content of workshops was meaningful in their role as an ABC (100%) (e.g., “I thought it was very affirming”), that content enhanced understanding of HIB (100%) (e.g., “It... gave us a place to say what we don’t know about”), and that content was well-aligned to relevant state standards, in this case the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights (100%) (e.g., “I think what you guys did was perfectly aligned,” “We had heard it before but still needed it clarified”). Workshop activities were also found to be engaging (100%) (e.g., “You changed it up enough,” “I thought [the activities] were all very engaging, the style of it”) and built on previously acquired knowledge (100%) (e.g., “It flowed very naturally and smoothly”). End-of-year survey results corroborated that participants felt workshops were interactive and engaging ( $M=4.24$ ,  $SD=0.69$ ). The last core feature identified as being of benefit was that learning was directed towards a recognizable goal (75%). This goal was the creation of a comprehensive bullying prevention plan that could be presented to local boards of education (e.g., “It guided us in planning how to address the law”). Workshops were also reported, in the end-of-year survey, to have increased BPLT’s ability to create a comprehensive bullying prevention plan ( $M=4.33$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ).

**Additional benefits of BPI over other PD activities.** Outside of the core and structural features identified by Porter and colleagues (2001), participants reported that following a specific process, as well as having an outline to assist in completing a bullying prevention plan enhanced their ability to complete their BPI plans (100%) (e.g., “Guided us in developing programs in our schools to alleviate bullying,” “I liked that [the plan] was broken into an outline”). BPI, by design, had an agenda that spanned all four

workshop sessions. While each workshop contained different content areas, all areas covered were part of the larger goal and agenda of providing districts with the skills and information to create address HIB in their home districts and to create a comprehensive bullying prevention plan. This design may account for the additional benefits noted above.

**Limitations of BPI compared to other PD activities.** It was anticipated that districts would identify a number of limitations to the structural and core features of BPI. Specific limitations were hypothesized related to workshops, consultations, and provided materials.

***Limitations of structural features.*** It was hypothesized that ABCs would identify limitations in the design related to various structural elements, though specific areas of limitation were not hypothesized. Mixed results were found in this area: participants did identify a number of limitations to the BPI approach, but a number of these limitations were only mentioned by one participant. With regard to structural limitations, ABCs identified logistical and staffing concerns as a limitation of the BPI program because these concerns made both participation in BPI and creation/implementation of their BPI plan more difficult. Some ABCs identified the year-long duration and frequency of workshops/consultations as problematic for non-administrators (50%) (e.g., “Situations made it so staff couldn’t come,” “I couldn’t pull my Anti-Bullying Specialists anymore”). Half of the districts interviewed also felt more face-to-face time would have been helpful, though this was not always feasible due to logistical concerns (e.g., “I didn’t have time for the time for consultation as much as I would have liked”). A majority of ABCs interviewed felt that including more administrators on the BPLT would have been helpful

in creating a plan (75%) (e.g., “An administrator can require, I can only suggest,” “I would request principals go as well”). Single ABCs also identified that on-site consultation was unnecessary (25%), that the length of travel to BPI was problematic (25%), and that more time was needed to work with their district team (25%). The most consistently mentioned limitation was the need for more administrator involvement, an unexpected result.

***Limitations of core features.*** Similar to structural features, core limitations were hypothesized to be reported by ABCs, but specific limitations were not hypothesized. Mixed results were found in this area, as each ABC identified at least one limitation to the design. There was a lack of consistency in reported limitations. The most consistently reported limitation was that there was too much content to cover in the time allotted. With regard to core feature limitations, of primary concern to ABCs was the amount and nature of material presented. While districts generally felt information was helpful and relevant, they expressed that the material and resources given were not always adequately matched to the time allotted to various topics and the existing skill sets of either ABCs or other members of the BPLT. Half of the districts interviewed felt that there was too much content for the time allotted (e.g., “We had more info than you could talk about”). Within this theme was a consistent sentiment that, particularly for ABCs, having to choose between various breakout sessions was not ideal, as they would have liked to have received all information presented. Beyond simply receiving materials, ABCs may have also wanted the opportunity to be actively involved in multiple breakout sessions, which would afford them the opportunity to gain and practice skills, as well as to participate actively in more aspects of the training program. Single ABCs also identified that they

felt more time could have been devoted to discussion of the legal aspects of HIB (25%) and that tasks and goals were not always clear (25%).

**Beliefs about plan implementation.** Participants were hypothesized to perceive themselves as being able to successfully implement their bullying prevention plans at the conclusion of the BPI program. Strong confirmation for this hypothesis was found as all districts felt capable of implementation and had already begun to implement plan elements, despite noted barriers to implementation. All interviewed districts had, at the time of the interview, been able to implement some, but not all pieces of their plans (e.g., “We’re using half of the prevention/intervention strategies we planned to use,” “We’re using pieces, that’s the only downside,” “Not enough time to get everybody on board to implement in September”). Seventy-five percent of districts interviewed had identified barriers to the implementation of their plans in full, with such identified barriers as time (25%), administrative support (50%), and other logistical issues (50%) (e.g., shifting focus to new priorities, having common planning time). Despite the barriers noted above, all ABCs interviewed felt that their district would be able to implement their BPI plan at some point in the future. Respondents to the end-of-year survey also reported that they were confident that they would be able to implement their comprehensive bullying prevention plan ( $M=4.21$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ).

**Beliefs about changes in school climate and policy.** It was anticipated that districts would feel that involvement with the BPI PD program would lead to changes in school practices and school functioning, including lower incidence of HIB. Mixed results were found in this area, as participants felt confident in their impact on HIB directly, but less confident in their feelings regarding positive impacts on school climate through BPI

involvement. ABCs attributed perceived lower incidence of HIB in the 2012-2013 school year as being, in part, due to their efforts in BPI (75%) (e.g., “Building a common culture and using character ed has helped,” “There are lots of things contributing to the lower incidence”). ABCs were less sure if participation in BPI had an effect on their school climate (50%) (e.g., “We’re a work in progress”). End-of-year survey results also indicated that participants felt that they would present their plans to their local Board of Education, which would serve to directly or indirectly inform school district policy ( $M=4.06$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ). Respondents to the end-of-year survey also reported that they felt that their bullying prevention efforts would positively impact their district’s overall school climate ( $M=4.44$ ,  $SD=0.72$ ).

**Enhanced knowledge of bullying prevention, intervention, and school-change.** It was hypothesized that participants would feel that BPI strongly enhanced their knowledge in the areas of bullying prevention, bullying intervention, and the school change process. Results confirmed the hypotheses related to perceived increases in content knowledge, as across the three areas assessed (i.e., bullying prevention, bullying intervention, school change); only one participant did not report a positive increase in one content area. ABCs reported that BPI enhanced their knowledge of bullying prevention (100%) (e.g., “Good information and resources”), bullying intervention (75%) (e.g., “Helped us with embracing the bystander”) and the school change process (100%) (e.g., “We’re comfortable with the whole process”). The end-of-year survey also indicated that participants felt that participating in BPI increased their knowledge specifically related to bullying prevention ( $M=4.03$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ). Furthermore, ABCs identified the immediate outcomes of participation with BPI as the development of a comprehensive bullying plan,

as well as an increase in knowledge of bullying prevention, intervention, and the school change process.

## **Discussion**

The current study examined the perceived impact of professional development activities provided through the pilot year of the Bullying Prevention Institute (BPI). Participant perceptions of the commonalities and differences between BPI and other professional development (PD) activities in the area of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) were also investigated. Furthermore, the current study examined the perceived benefits and drawbacks of previously identified core elements (e.g., a focus on content knowledge, active learning opportunities, and learning towards a known, identified goal) and structural elements (e.g., the types of activities (reform vs. traditional), overall duration of PD activities, time spent in PD activities, and grouping by profession/role), found to be integral to effective PD programs (Porter et. al, 2001). The perceived impact of participation in BPI was also studied. Perceived impact was determined through reported changes in participant knowledge, ability to implement a bullying prevention plan, and ability to make changes in school climate and school policy.

Anti-Bullying Coordinators (ABCs) reported in interviews that BPI was fundamentally different from other PD activities in which they had engaged (e.g., one-day trainings/conferences, staff in-services within their school district, legal trainings). Essential differences noted by ABCs between these “as usual” PD activities and BPI were primarily related to the core and structural elements of effective PD described previously by Porter and colleagues (2001). Overall, ABCs reported more positive

feelings towards BPI than other, more traditional PD activities. This indicates that one-day workshops, staff in-service trainings, and other typical professional development activities may be viewed by educators as inadequate in addressing their needs, specifically in the areas of HIB and the school-change process.

Satisfaction with BPI was high, as was satisfaction with various aspects of the BPI program (e.g., workshops, consultations). This held true for both immediate measures of satisfaction (i.e., workshop feedback surveys), as well as for measures completed after the conclusion of the program (i.e., end of year survey, ABC interviews). Overall satisfaction with the program and individual program elements indicates that BPI was well received by participants. Furthermore, results indicate that the structural and core elements of BPI were agreeable to a wide variety of stakeholders (e.g., administrators, teachers, mental health professionals, community members).

### **Benefits of the BPI Program**

**Benefits related to structural elements of the program.** Porter and colleagues (2001) previously indicated that including reform activities (i.e., active learning), increasing the duration of training (both total contact time and overall time-span of training), and grouping participants by role/profession, increases PD effectiveness. These findings have also been extended to the content areas of school-change and social-emotional learning (Danielson, Doolittle & Bradley, 2007; Kratochwill et al., 2007). All of the elements listed above were included in BPI and participants reported that all of these elements were beneficial.

Intuitively, it is easy to discern that increasing the amount of face-to-face training time as well as the total duration of PD activities increases perceived effectiveness of

workshop activities. What was covered through BPI in four workshops and additional consultation sessions could not be addressed in a one-time workshop. This provided participants with time to think through the information presented, to return to subsequent sessions with questions, to have questions answered during consultations sessions, and to have content reinforced throughout the year. Even a well-constructed and well-delivered one-time workshop quickly fades in the memory of participants and the zeal for change dissipates as participants become temporally removed from the workshop and are placed back in their home districts. Research on PD consistently shows a loss of enthusiasm and lack of results following one-day workshops (Dusenbury, Brannigan, Falco, & Hansen, 2001; Klinger, 2004; Rogers, 2003). Engaging in activities throughout the school year not only allows more content to be delivered and reinforced, it frequently reminds participants to engage in recommended activities and to keep considering and reviewing workshop content. In this way, consultation sessions are considered a means of propelling district progress. The mere act of contacting district personnel between sessions may have been enough to spur between-session progress. Often, district personnel can become bogged down in daily job activities and “putting out fires”, leading to prevention programs and activities such as BPI to be put off, when in fact prevention activities are needed to decrease the need for daily intervention. Having consistent contact and training opportunities spaced throughout the year may have provided the benefit of maintaining progress towards training goals.

The pilot year of BPI represented a mix of reform and traditional PD activities. Reform activities are active in nature (e.g., study groups, reflection, and mentoring/consultation), while traditional activities are more passive (e.g., lecture,



PowerPoint presentations). The inclusion of reform activities in conjunction with traditional PD activities added perceived benefit to the program. Participants reported that workshop activities were engaging and that the reform activities (e.g., consultation, group work, and the development of a bullying prevention plan) were helpful. It is possible that participants, as a result of these reform activities, gained a sense of their involvement as a process, rather than the bestowing of information from trainer to trainee. Participants assume more responsibility for program outcomes and engage more with PD activities when opportunities for active learning (reform activities) are included (Birman et al., 2000; Landry et al., 2009).

Participants identified working and collaborating in teams, both within and across districts, as one of the most helpful and important aspects of BPI. There are several possible explanations for this finding. When working across districts, participants were frequently grouped by role. Prior to the pilot year of BPI, no educator or administrator in New Jersey had ever assumed the role of Anti-Bullying Coordinator or Anti-Bullying Specialist (ABS). The ability to collaborate with others who were facing similar problems in the initial implementation of the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights (ABR) may have helped assuage fears regarding the new legislation. Participants were likely feeling stress and concern over their ability to address HIB in their districts because of the new legislation and a state-wide focus on bullying prevention and intervention. BPI provided a forum for discussion between professionals of similar roles which was not possible in individual districts. Participants were able to brainstorm and troubleshoot day-to-day difficulties with professionals occupying their same role. For instance, each district has only one ABC. Particularly at the onset of the ABR, ABCs may not have

been connected to others occupying their same role. At the time of the pilot year of BPI, the amount of resources, ideas, programs, etc. available to ABCs and ABSs were not as well-developed as they are now. This is likely why participants identified that hearing programs, ideas, and strategies from other districts was beneficial. School districts often function in “silos” and little sharing occurs between districts. This is especially true for building-based professionals (e.g., ABSs) who often do not have the opportunity to share with those from other districts. Rather, building based professionals often receive disseminated information from district administrators (Kent, 2004; Rogers, 2003).

Porter and colleagues (2001) reported the need for grouping by profession as a major component of effective PD. In the case of bullying prevention, this was often not feasible for individuals outside of BPI workshops (e.g., no time in-district for ABSs to meet, only one ABC per district). BPI allowed for this grouping and this time, which was seen as providing an important benefit over other “as usual” PD activities. The opportunity to collaborate with professionals from other districts is rare in one-day workshops and in-service trainings. If the opportunity to collaborate is available, it is limited due to the short-term nature of the PD activity. This precludes the building of meaningful relationships between participating districts.

BPI participants also reported working in mixed-role district teams as beneficial. The type of content and goals of the training help explain why this type of grouping may have worked well for BPI participants. For example, mixed profession grouping would be more problematic in a typical educational PD program, such as the delivery of content related to a new academic curriculum. Having different grade levels or professions included on a team could lead to various different perspectives, as well as the lack of a

clear vision, goals, and leadership. In the area of bullying prevention, intervention, and whole-school change, the inclusion of a variety of perspectives is seen as essential. Multiple ABCs concluded that their district teams were “more than the sum of [their] parts.” The inclusion of a team leader (the ABC) was also seen as important in directing team focus and team activities. Previous research has reported benefits for same-role grouping, however the results of the current study indicate that mixed-role grouping, in certain instances, can also be beneficial.

**Benefits related to the core elements of the program.** BPI included the core elements of: active learning among and between teams, presenting material aligned with relevant state standards (i.e., The Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights), building on previously acquired knowledge, and directing learning towards a known goal. Participants recognized that BPI contained these elements and reported that they found each of these individual elements beneficial.

Workshop content and activities are the most easily identifiable sources of value to participants. Participants are likely to be focused on the quality and relevance of workshop content, particularly as it relates to their daily functioning within their role. If presented content does not seem relevant, meaningful, or specific, participants will be turned off to participating and become unmotivated. Likewise, if information is not tied to relevant standards, a similar effect will occur. Content was developed for BPI with the intent of being meaningful, relevant, and tied to state standards (i.e., the ABR). This was likely of particular importance to participants due to the new demands of the ABR and a state-wide focus on HIB. Participants generally, but not universally, reported that content

was meaningful, relevant, and tied to state standards. Based on these results, it is worthwhile to examine and refine workshop content and activities.

ABCs reported that having a known and specific process and an outline to follow was helpful in creating district bullying prevention plans. This indicates that making PD participants aware of workshop activities and expectations early in a PD program may aid in motivation and overall quality of experience. Furthermore, it is beneficial to provide tools and frameworks to aid participants in applying workshop content. The reported benefit of these tools/frameworks highlights the importance of workshop handouts and materials, an area unaccounted for in previous descriptions of effective PD elements (Porter et al., 2001). Overall, the findings of this study corroborate previously identified core elements of effective PD, while suggesting additional elements to be investigated further.

### **BPI Program Impacts**

The current study investigated the perceived impact of involvement with the BPI program. Participants provided information on their perceived ability to: complete a comprehensive bullying prevention plan, implement this plan, and create changes in school climate and school practices. Participants also reported on perceived increases in knowledge in the areas of bullying intervention, bullying prevention, and the school-change process.

Districts produced plans containing, on average, 72% of the required elements put forth in the rubric provided to districts. Despite the variability in the completeness of plans, all interviewed ABCs reported that they had been able to implement some elements of their plan. Participants reported confidence in their ability to implement

more plan elements moving forward. Specific barriers to implementation were identified by a number of ABCs including district buy-in, support, and logistics (e.g., meeting time). ABCs reported that BPI involvement led, in part, to reduced HIB incidents in their districts. Interviewed ABCs also attributed changes to other activities as well (e.g., existing programs, more comfort with the law). Half of the ABCs interviewed felt that BPI had helped make an impact in the area of school climate. Participants also indicated that BPI enhanced their knowledge of bullying prevention, bullying intervention, and the school change process.

Interviewed ABCs were specifically chosen to be interviewed based on the percent completion of their bullying prevention plans. Regardless of how complete plans were, interviewed ABCs universally reported that implementation of some program elements had begun and that in the future they would be able to implement additional anti-bullying activities. This indicates several points of note. Participants' completion of a plan presentation may have been unrelated to the actual content and procedural knowledge gained from workshops and consultations. The presentation of a plan may also serve as a poor measure of important program outcomes (e.g., knowledge acquisition, increased role effectiveness). Districts were also not informed of their presentation scores and they may have been under the influence that they had presented a complete and thorough bullying prevention plan, even when this was not the case. District team members were often serving numerous roles within their district and simply may not have had the time or resources to create a presentation that was closely aligned with the rubric provided. Participants may also have been overconfident in their ability to effectively make change or implement programs within their districts. As nearly all

ABCs that participated were administrators, they may also feel more empowered in their ability to affect district-wide change, when compared to other participants, such as building-based professionals (e.g., ABSs, teachers).

While a great deal has been studied with regard to teacher practice and PD, the area of improving social-emotional functioning and school-change processes through PD has not been thoroughly investigated (Kratochwill et. al, 2007). With regard to PD in the area of teacher practice, likelihood of implementation and the success of implementation have been found to hinge on gradual change, feedback/follow-up on professional practice, and the support of other professionals (Guskey, 2002; Landry et al., 2009). BPI included the elements of gradual change, feedback/follow-up, and developing professional support networks. ABCs may have been confident in their ability to implement their bullying prevention plans due in part to these program elements. The inclusion of core and structural elements of effective PD has also been shown to lead to greater transmission of knowledge and later positive change within school settings. The current study provides support for these previous findings, as study participants felt confident in their content knowledge and ability to implement programming to positively impact school climate and school change.

### **Limitations of the BPI Program**

Generally, strengths of the BPI program were reported with higher frequency than limitations, indicating that the difficulties described below may have been more idiosyncratic to particular districts rather than programmatic issues with BPI. That being said, all limitations discussed below were identified by at least two of the four interviewed ABCs.

**Limitations involving structural elements of the program.** Participants reported a number of limitations of both the BPI program as well as limitations due to outside influences. While ABCs reported that length and duration of the BPI program provided benefits, they also stated that the length and duration of the program was problematic for non-administrators. Non-administrators (e.g., teachers, mental health professionals) tend to have less flexible schedules, including more building-based responsibilities. This speaks to the larger difficulty of developing training programs that fit well with existing school structure and likely why “traditional” PD developed the way that it has. Often, teachers receive professional development during specified “professional development” days or half-days, wherein all staff receives training at the same time. This was not the model utilized by BPI, and the institute-style model was found to be problematic for some districts. The use of an on-going, sustained approach such as that of BPI requires greater investment on the part of districts and personnel. An institute-style approach also requires school districts to view PD in a broader context, beyond mandatory trainings and compliance-based instruction. In developing a training program, the time investment made by school districts should be recognized and respected. This includes the establishment of clear guidelines regarding staff responsibilities, time commitments of staff, and providing calendars of events and activities.

ABCs specifically recommended that more administrators be included on district teams in the future. This limitation may have been identified for a number of reasons. Schools, as systems, function as Human Service Organizations (HSOs). Domain theory states that within HSOs, there are three key domains: service, management, and policy

(Kouzes & Mico, 1979). The service domain is populated by professionals who provide direct service. The goal of this domain is to provide care to clients. Administrators make up the managerial domain, whose focus is on efficiency and effectiveness. The policy domain is made up of elected officials, board members, and others who make governing policies. The goal of the policy domain is to create equitable and fair policies to drive the HSO forward. These three domains are inherent in HSOs and the goals of these domains are often in opposition to one another (Kouzes & Mico, 1979). It is probable that ABCs would want greater representation from those who exist in the management domain (e.g., administrators/supervisors), as these professionals would share their goals and concerns. Administrators also have greater influence within the policy domain area. This is in contrast to service providers (e.g., ABSs, teachers, mental health professionals) who see the school and district-wide problems through an entirely different lens; that of the service domain. Domain theory, generally speaking, may also explain Porter and colleagues' (2001) original finding that grouping by norm/role has a positive impact on PD effectiveness. Conflict and reduced effectiveness may occur when those who come from one domain (e.g., teachers), complete training with those representative of other domains (e.g., administrators, board of education members).

Another explanation for the desire for more administrative involvement in BPI may be due to power dynamics existing within school systems. Within any organization, individuals derive power from a number of areas. Administrators often draw power from their ability to control punishments and rewards, their formal position within the organization as a manager, expertise in particular areas, connections with other powerful individuals, and access to information (French & Raven, 1959). Non-administrators



(e.g., teachers, school psychologists) do not have the same access to these sources of power. Inclusion of these personnel in a program like BPI would serve to increase the power of other, non-administrative personnel through establishing connections with influential people, having greater access to important information (e.g., needs assessment results, best practices), and increased staff expertise. This may be threatening to an administrator's organizational power, particularly if the purpose of program involvement is to affect change in areas such as school policy and school-change (typically been the domain of administrators). Schools are, in nearly all cases, top-down hierarchical systems (Kent, 2004). Sharing power and decision-making with other staff members may be undesirable based on the history of the school system. Such organizational dynamics were not directly measured and the impact of these dynamics is idiosyncratic to the organization from which participants were drawn. Consideration of the organizational context and influences outside the training environment should be given significant attention in future studies.

**Limitations involving core elements of the program.** A number of limitations involving core elements of the program were identified by ABCs. ABCs reported that the amount and nature of information presented was often problematic. While participants reported the amount of workshop and consultation time as a benefit, ABCs also felt that the time allotted to some content areas was not adequate. Furthermore, participants reported that content and activities did not always match participants' existing knowledge or skills. For instance, some ABCs were not familiar with the school change process or conducting a needs assessment prior to BPI. ABCs stated that additional instruction, support, or materials were needed in this area.

These limitations highlight important issues in designing and delivering training programs. It can be difficult, particularly when dealing with a diverse group of school districts and stakeholders, to account for existing levels of knowledge. ABCs provided feedback in this area, and it is probable that they entered training with a knowledge base and set of skills that was very different from that of teachers, community members, and even mental health professionals. Even with backgrounds in administration, many ABCs were not comfortable with conducting a needs assessment, constructing a survey, etc.

### **Implications for Practice**

The current study provides pertinent findings in several areas related to the creation and delivery of effective professional development. The goal of all professional development activities is to increase knowledge in participants as well as to create lasting and meaningful changes in professional functioning and practice. To this end, the consideration of the structural and core elements of professional development identified above should not be overlooked in the development of a comprehensive PD program. Furthermore, there is a significant need for sustained PD programs within schools due to the demands on staff of numerous job responsibilities, competing time concerns, and frequent changes in state and local mandates. This sustained approach, along with consultation and between-session contact, keeps the program focus fresh and important in the minds of participants and school districts.

Logistically, schools face the challenge of the availability of staff time and other resources. This highlights the need for an approach that is tailored to the individual needs of participant groups. The use of pre-test measures of existing skills and knowledge could serve as a valuable tool to help guide the focus of workshop content sessions, show

respect for the time investment of participating professionals, and help ensure that workshop content is specific, meaningful, and relevant. The use of a pre-test would also help tailor between-workshop activities to the individual needs of districts. Participant responses suggest that providing information more closely aligned with the specific needs of individual districts has more relevance and meaning. Individualizing content may create added motivation for change and impact the likelihood of implementation. Another means of obtaining information to individualize PD activities would be to hold a pre-meeting with team leaders to discuss program content and to provide resources for participants to review. This would allow participants to identify areas of need and concern prior to the onset of training.

Often, workshops can be overly-driven by content. Due to the time constraints described previously, those who provide PD often feel pressure to include as much content in as little time as possible. This was also reported by some participants to be the case with BPI workshops. The creation and presentation of a tangible product (e.g., prevention plan) as the result of participation gives participants an opportunity to practice the skills and knowledge presented in workshops. Providing opportunities during training to create tangible products and to apply training material is strongly suggested. Providing such opportunities for practice is of particular importance to schools, since there is often little or no time to apply, practice, and experiment with new skills away from the training environment. Furthermore, practicing within the training environment allows for immediate troubleshooting and consultation with trainers. The results of the current study suggest a “less is more” approach when it comes to PD. Future training programs should focus on providing essential information and skills with the opportunity

to practice and solidify these skills. A wealth of information and best practices in the areas of bullying prevention and intervention is readily accessible to most school staff. This suggests that the focus of workshops and trainings in this area should be focused on application, implementation, troubleshooting, and the imbedding of these practices within the culture of a school.

Including opportunities for teamwork, both within and across participant groups, can also serve a valuable function and should be considered when designing professional development programs. Participants in the current study often saw themselves as working within an insular community (e.g., their home school or school district), with few connections to other school districts locally or across the state. In fact, a number of ABCs identified that the time spent traveling with their team to training was incredibly valuable, as it gave team members discussion time with other district professionals not from their specific school building. This indicates that these types of conversations do not typically happen within school districts (particularly not with administrators). Facilitating discussions between different professional groups could have a tremendous impact on district functioning as a whole. Professional groups who better understand each other's concerns and stresses are less apt to be in conflict (Kouzes & Mico, 1979). Further, facilitating connections with other professionals allows a free-exchange of ideas related to effective programs and activities. Connections can also help participants find or generate solutions to common problems. The results of the current study suggest that future training programs include time for within- and across-district sharing.

Assessment of the organizational climate of participating school districts was beyond the scope of this study, however such an investigation should be strongly

considered in the creation of future PD programs. Organizational dynamics can serve to either aid or hinder the work of professionals. Though professionals are often well-intentioned, motivated, and knowledgeable, they are likely to encounter systems in their school district that are resistant to change, causing frustration and resentment. Future training programs can, and should, specifically address these concerns through exploration and discussion of existing organizational dynamics and a focus on effective ways to make systemic changes. This may be particularly important for administrators, as they are typically the most easily able to exert influence over system functioning, with the consideration that schools are inherently top-down, hierarchical systems (Kent, 2004).

While not directly assessed by the current study, time should be specifically devoted in PD activities on the topic of how to disseminate information to other school professionals. It is unreasonable and impractical to provide professional development to an entire school or district, particularly in the institute-style approach utilized by BPI. School professionals (particularly administrators) are often tasked with conducting trainings back in their home districts and with “turn-keying” training information to other school staff. Being able to “turnkey” information leads to a broad base of support and knowledge within districts. This may not come easily for some and essential information may be lost in the translation of material from workshop to district in-service. The transfer of knowledge to other district personnel was not explicitly covered in BPI. Providing instruction on how to present information to colleagues could be of significant value in a participant’s ability to effectively establish and maintain change within their home district.

### **Study Limitations**

A number of limitations in the current study design may have impacted results. Participants provided self-report information regarding their perceptions around a variety of areas and outcomes. These reports, while important, do not provide objective data by which to examine the effectiveness of BPI program activities. Having access to objective outcome data (e.g., HIB incidence reports, a test of knowledge related to workshop content) would have been beneficial in determining the true impact of BPI. Measures of participant's perceptions are important in understanding their feelings toward training activities, however the true impact of BPI involvement cannot be gleaned without information related to HIB incidence, degree of program implementation, and tests of participant knowledge. Use of such outcome measures is strongly suggested in future investigations.

Participants in this study may have been unwilling, particularly during ABC interviews, to provide negative feedback about BPI or their school district. As many ABCs were administrators in their districts, they may have felt pressure to state that their district was performing well and experiencing fewer problems than may have been the case. Also, the interviewer was known to the ABCs, as he was one of the consultants to BPI. This preexisting relationship may have led to bias in the interpretation of results. Participants may have been less open about negative aspects of the program due to this preexisting relationship. If something had truly been of poor quality or not helpful, participants may not have felt open to share or disclose that information.

Selection of BPI participating districts may have impacted results. Participants were selected through a competitive application process. This may have created a selection bias, as district teams who were motivated enough to complete an application of

sufficient quality for acceptance into the program may have been more likely to engage in workshop activities. Districts may have also been positively motivated by the atmosphere surrounding the implementation of the ABR. School districts were feeling significant pressure from both legislative and public/media sources to address HIB. BPI presented itself as a means of addressing HIB within school districts and as a support for districts in addressing new legal concerns. Having access to this resource may have increased participant motivation to engage with training and complete program activities. Conversely, motivation may also have been affected because BPI was a free program during its pilot year. Participants may have felt less commitment to program activities as their district team was receiving training and support at no cost. Participants may have also had lower expectations for a program in its pilot year. These various impacts on motivation were not assessed in the current design, but they may have had a significant impact on program participation and outcomes.

ABCs also frequently expressed conflicting and opposing viewpoints during their interviews. For example, an ABC would indicate that the amount of face-to-face contact was appropriate; however the same ABC would also report that more face-to-face contact was desired. These seemingly opposite sentiments may not be as conflicting as they first appear. For instance, participants may have felt certain elements of training were sufficient, but that changes could be made to make good elements even better (e.g., having more time for training and practice would always be beneficial).

The amount of time that elapsed between completion of the BPI program and the ABC interviews was also a possible limitation of this design, as it had been 6-11 months from the end of BPI to the ABC interviews. While this delay allowed participants time to

implement program elements and reflect on their experience, it may have made recollection of the program activities difficult. The use of multiple interviews (e.g., immediately after program completion, at a six-month follow-up), is called for. Furthermore, participants were likely more comfortable with anti-bullying legislation as well as their role as an ABC, which may have influenced results (likely in the direction of more positive feelings about district outcomes). Some of this concern is alleviated by the end-of-year survey data. The survey data was obtained immediately after the conclusion of the BPI pilot year and was found to be congruent with ABC reports of BPI program impacts.

As noted previously, districts were not aware of scores on their plan presentations. This lack of feedback was a limitation, as districts may have felt they had produced a complete, comprehensive plan. This may have given participants more confidence in their own knowledge and ability to implement program elements, leading to inflated reports in this area. Reporting feedback on district products and outcomes is suggested for future PD programs.

A significant limitation in this design was the low number of participants who completed the ABC interviews (n=4). Based on the small number of ABCs interviewed, it is inappropriate to generalize these findings. Having a small number of participants in this area also makes it difficult to discern differences between groups (e.g., by district factor group, impact of plan completion, team effects).

The current study did not account for district-level factors which may have influenced results. For instance, the impact of team functioning and district support was not investigated. One district with a minimally complete plan had been approached to be



interviewed by the examiner. Due to district and administrative pressure as well as concerns over district reprisal and confidentiality, they declined to participate. This provides information about the difficult administrative and organizational environment in which some district teams were operating. These organizational factors may have accounted for some of the variability in plan completion, participation, and overall feelings towards BPI and the various program components. Logistical, district-specific concerns regarding implementation were also noted, indicating that troubleshooting or exploring these areas further within the context of workshops or consultations is appropriate and necessary.

### **Future Directions**

The results of the current study indicate a number of future directions and areas of inquiry. To address the limitations of the current study design, completing an investigation with a larger sample size is needed. The collection of objective sources of data (e.g., HIB incidence rates, objective tests of content knowledge) would provide more tangible evidence of program impacts. The use of an independent evaluator outside of the original program structure would also serve to limit both a potential source of bias as well as to make participants feel more open to expressing negative thoughts and emotions related to the inquiry. To further address this issue, the use of multiple independent coders is called for in future research. Ensuring that data is collected in a timely manner quickly following the completion of PD activities would also be beneficial in eliminating hindsight bias. Related to this, following school districts longitudinally would provide important information related to long-term program effectiveness as well as the potential need for follow-up, booster sessions, etc.

As the current study did not directly manipulate the variables considered, the use of a true experimental design is warranted. The current study provides explanatory and exploratory value, but lacks the ability to draw strong conclusions as no direct manipulation took place. The use of control and experimental groups as well as the manipulation of individual program elements (e.g., number/length of contact, inclusion of consultation, changes in program activities) would allow for the isolation and testing of the impact of these various elements.

### **Summary**

The findings of the current study contribute to knowledge in the area of effective professional development, particularly in the understudied PD content areas of bullying prevention, intervention, and school-change. Participants found engaging in a year-long institute-style approach beneficial. Structural and core elements of effective PD were also identified as being valuable. Structural elements identified as important included: a year-long duration with consistent contact, adequate face-to-face contact, consultation, and working with peers, both within and across districts. Core elements identified as being beneficial included that: content was relevant, specific, and meaningful, content was aligned with appropriate laws and standards, activities were engaging, PD activities built on previously acquired knowledge, and participants worked towards a known goal. Participants reported that engaging in BPI led to confidence in their ability to implement prevention and intervention programs related to HIB, to make changes in school climate and school policy, as well as an overall increase in knowledge in the areas of bullying prevention, bullying intervention, and the school change process.

The current study also has implications for the development of future PD programs. Future PD programs would benefit from frequent contact over a longer period of time than typical PD activities. There should also be a focus on the pre-assessment of participant skills and knowledge to individualize workshop and consultation content to participant needs. This individualization would allow a move away from content-heavy trainings towards trainings focused on application, implementation, and progress monitoring. Results also indicated that participants found learning programs and content from other participants helpful. Working in a team with multiple different stakeholders was also beneficial within this content area and training program structure. Results of the study also point to the need for a discussion and analysis of the organizational climate of participants, as well as ways for participants to disseminate and effectively garner support for implementation outside of the training environment.

This study confirms that the elements of effective professional development identified by Porter and colleagues (2001) have bearing in the area of HIB and the school-change process. These findings also relate to the positive impact seen in a PD program for school-wide Response to Intervention (Danielson, Doolittle & Bradley, 2007; Kratochwill et al., 2007). This indicates that effective PD for teachers, administrators, and mental health professionals often contain common elements. The impact of design, structure, execution, and support provided in PD activities can be maximized through using the elements identified above, leading to more capable, competent, and effective school-based professionals.

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**Table 1**  
***District Demographics***

District Name	District Factor Group	Setting	Geographic Location	Grades Serviced	Enrollment	Plan Completion %
District A	N/A	Rural	South	K-12	277	88.57
District B	GH	Suburban	North	K-12	4169	37.14
District C	GH	Suburban	Central	Pre-K-12	5165	91.43
District D	DE	Suburban	South	Pre-K-8	1572	71.43
District E	GH	Suburban	North	K-12	3931	85.71
District F	A	Urban/Rural	South	K-8	220	97.14
District G	FG	Suburban	Central	K-12	5890	80.00
District H	FG	Suburban	Central	K-12	3893	65.71
District I	A	Urban	North	Pre-K-12	10333	65.71
District J	DE	Suburban	North	K-12	2162	82.86
District K	A	Urban	South	K-12	6617	37.14
District L	FG	Rural	North	6-12	1013	62.86



## Appendix A

### BPI Plan Evaluation Checklist

**District:** \_\_\_\_\_

Yes/No	Plan Component	Notes/Explanation
<b>I. Team Vision</b>		
	a. BPLT has a vision/mission statement	
<b>II. Needs Assessment</b>		
	a. Data collected on:	
	i. Number and nature of HIB incidents	
	ii. School climate	
	iii. Relevant risk/protective factors	
	b. Data sources utilized	
	i. Primary and secondary data	
	ii. Quantitative and qualitative data	
	c. Data analysis conducted	
	d. Results communicated to district or report completed	

III. Resource Assessment		
	a. Documentation of current district efforts	
	d. Gaps in service have been identified	
IV. Project Goals		
	a. Goals are present	
	b. BPLT goals are SMART	
	c. Reflective of vision/mission statement	
V. Prevention Strategies		
	a. Prevention strategies identified for:	
	i. Individual bullying prevention;	
	ii. Classroom-based bullying prevention; and	
	iii. School-wide bullying prevention.	
	b. Programs are evidence-based	
	d. Discusses utilizing existing district resources	

	<b>e.</b> Strategies address identified gaps and goals	
	<b>f.</b> Discusses how strategies will inform district policy	
<b>VI. Intervention Strategies</b>		
	<b>a.</b> Protocol for staff intervention in bullying	
	<b>b.</b> Standardized reporting procedures	
	<b>c.</b> Standardized investigation procedures	
	<b>d.</b> Identifies consequences for bullying	
<b>VII. Implementation</b>		
	<b>a.</b> Mentions strategies to increase organizational capacity	
	<b>b.</b> Description of program logistics (for previously identified programs)	
	<b>c.</b> Discusses a plan for staff training	
	<b>d.</b> Progress monitoring	

VIII. Evaluation		
	a. Process evaluation measures:	
	b. Outcome evaluation measures are planned to assess changes	
	c. Plans for long-term evaluation	
IX. Sustainability		
	a. Plan to continue BPLT activities in 2012-2013 school year	
	d. Methods for publicizing BPLT activities are planned	
	e. Funding for continuing BPLT projects has been sought and/or secured	
	f. BPLT has a plan to make connections/gain support from key stakeholders	

## Appendix B

### End-of-Year Survey

Please rate the degree to which you <u>agree</u> with the following statements:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Program Services</b>					
1. Overall, the experience of participating in BPI was valuable.	1	2	3	4	5
2. <i>Open-ended question: What was most valuable?</i>					
3. <i>Open-ended question: What was least valuable?</i>					
4. The BPI workshops promoted learning on topics related to bullying prevention and planning.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Facilitators were effective in delivering the content and materials at workshop sessions.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Workshops were interactive and engaging.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The BPI training workshops increased our ability to develop a comprehensive bullying prevention plan.	1	2	3	4	5
8. BPI provided practical tools and materials for developing a bullying prevention plan.	1	2	3	4	5
9. <i>Open-ended question: What, if anything, do you think should be added to the training and/or materials?</i>					
10. <i>Open-ended question: What, if anything, do you think should be removed from the training and/or materials?</i>					
11. The four workshops were conveniently scheduled throughout the school year.	1	2	3	4	5
12. On-site consultations facilitated our team's progress in between workshop dates.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Our district's consultant was effective in addressing our specific needs.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Team Experience:</b>					

14. Our BPLT consists of team members that are representative of our district as a whole.	1	2	3	4	5
15. All team members had an active role in developing our plan.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Team members communicated regularly between workshops and consultations.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Our leadership team made effective group decisions while developing the plan.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Our team will continue to meet and work together during the 2012-2013 school year.	1	2	3	4	5
19. What, if anything, was most challenging about working together as a district team this year?					
20. What, if anything, was most rewarding about working together as a district team this year?					
<b><i>Products and Outcomes:</i></b>					
21. I believe we developed a quality and comprehensive bullying prevention plan as a result of participating in BPI.	1	2	3	4	5
22. We plan to present our plan to the district's Board of Education.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I feel confident that our district will implement our bullying prevention plan during the 2012-2013 school year.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I believe that, overtime, our bullying prevention efforts will have a positive impact on school climate change throughout our district.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Additional comments regarding the development of your plan and its implementation:					
26. Indicate your role on the BPLT (check boxes provided for different roles)					

<b><u>End of Year Survey: 3 Major Domain Areas</u></b>		
<b>Program Services</b>	<b>Team Experience</b>	<b>Products &amp; Outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction of experience with BPI</li> <li>• Training and material quality</li> <li>• Scheduling of the 4 workshops</li> <li>• Consultations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to form a high functioning team</li> <li>• Challenges and rewards of teaming on bullying prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of plan quality</li> <li>• Confidence in plan implementation</li> <li>• Expectations for changes in school climate</li> </ul>

## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Protocol**

1. Please tell me about your experience this past year in working with BPI
2. What other professional development has your district completed with regards to bullying?
  - How does BPI compare to these programs?
    - In what ways was BPI similar?
    - In what ways was it different?
3. Compared to other professional development you have experienced in the area of bullying and/or school climate:
  - Did you find having four separate workshops spaced throughout the year helpful? Why or Why not?
  - Did you find on-site consultation helpful? Why or Why not?
  - Do you feel that workshops and consultation sessions were of adequate length?
  - Did you find working as a team helpful? Why or Why not?
  - Was the content of BPI workshops relevant and specific enough to your work? Why or Why not?
  - Do you feel that activities during BPI workshops were meaningful to your work?
    - i. Did they enhance your understanding of the content?
    - ii. Did you find the activities engaging?
    - iii. Are there any activities in particular that stood out?
  - Do you feel that BPI was aligned with the NJ Anti-bullying Bill of Rights?
  - Did BPI build effectively on what you already knew and/or what you learned in BPI workshops and consultations?
4. Do you feel that you produced a complete, comprehensive anti-bullying plan as a result of your involvement with BPI?
  - Do you believe that this plan is of a high quality? Why or Why not?
5. Did BPI significantly enhance your knowledge about bullying prevention and intervention?
6. Did BPI significantly enhance your knowledge of the school-change process (e.g., needs assessment, evaluation, etc.)
7. Do you believe your team will be able to implement your plan in your district? Why or Why not?
  - If yes, Do you believe that your plan will be successful in lowering incidence of HIB in our district? Why or Why not?



- Do you believe that your plan will be successful in positively impacting school climate in your district? Why or Why not?

## Appendix D

### Thematic Codes

#### *Meta Codes*

1. The structure of BPI was different than that of other PD activities related to HIB (e.g., the number and duration of workshops, the combination of reform and traditional professional development activities), which helped improved the quality of our professional development experience.
2. The ability to work and learn with team members, other BPI teams, and BPI staff helped BPLTs learn more and develop a comprehensive bullying prevention plan.
3. Workshop content was helpful, relevant, and meaningful. Content helped to inform my work and was well aligned with state standards.
4. Participating in BPI enhanced my knowledge of bullying prevention, intervention, and the school change process.
5. Following a specific process and having an outline to assist in completing a bullying prevention plan enhanced my team's ability to complete our own plan.
6. BPI helped us develop a comprehensive plan which we will be able to implement in our district.
7. Our BPI plan will help us lower incidence of HIB and improve our school climate.
8. Logistical and staffing concerns made participation in BPI and implementation of our BPI plan at times problematic.
9. The amount and nature of material presented and resources given was not always adequately matched to the time allotted and our existing skill sets.

#### *Common Themes Across Interviews*

1. **How does the institute model of professional development used by the Bullying Prevention Institute (BPI) differ from other professional development activities completed by member districts?**
  - **Differences in General Experience**
    - More networking with other schools (3/4)
    - Helped in developing a plan (3/4)
    - Overall positive experience (4/4)
    - Provided district survey help (1/4)

- BPI members were helpful as experts (1/4)
  - Took place away from school (1/4)
  - **Other kinds of professional development**
    - One day conferences (2/4)
    - Staff in-services (4/4)
    - Strauss-Esmay Legal Training (2/4)
    - Student assemblies (2/4)
    - Outside ongoing program (1/4) (i.e., The United Way)
- 2. What, if any, benefits do participants perceive BPI to have over other types of professional development they have used? *What core and structural elements of effective professional development do participants perceive as having added benefit over typical professional development activities?***

#### **General Benefits**

- BPI gave more resources than other workshops (3/4)
- BPI was more comprehensive than other workshops (3/4)
- BPI took place out of district (4/4)
- Having travel time with colleagues was beneficial (3/4)
- Districts were able to learn from each other (4/4)
- Keynote speakers provided additional benefit (4/4)
- BPI focused on culture change, not just legal issues (2/4)

#### **Structural Feature Benefits**

- Year-long duration was helpful (4/4)
  - “Can’t give all that info in one day”
  - “You need it blocked up”
  - “Get to come back and ask questions”
- Having spaced-out workshops was helpful (4/4)
  - “Easier for administrator to put in schedule”
  - “Kept you focused on topics throughout the year”
- Amount of face-to-face time was sufficient (3/4)
  - “We wouldn’t have had the time to work together [back at school]”
  - “Perfect blend of workshop to working with your group”
- On-site consultation was beneficial (3/4)
  - “Really coached us through”
  - “I don’t think we would have been as effective ... without her”
  - “Easier to have a conversation during consultation”
  - “Nice to have the help if we needed it”
- Working with peers was helpful (4/4)

- “More schools and more people to learn from and share with”
- “Made great connections with other districts”
- “We need the conversations with others about what we can do better, the ideas in different schools, projects, getting kids excited, etc.”
- Working as a team was helpful (4/4)
  - “We’d continue those team meetings back in district”
  - “Would have been amazing if I had better players”
  - “We were more than the sum of our parts”
  - “We are very bonded and I don’t think that would have happened”
  - “One person could not possibly do what we did as a team”

### **Core Feature Benefits**

- Content was relevant/specific to my work (3/4)
  - “There was a wide enough range of content”
  - “I liked that [the plan] was broken into an outline”
  - “Workshops were broken down appropriately and timed well”
  - “Guided us in developing programs in our schools to alleviate bullying”
- Content was meaningful to my work as an ABC (4/4)
  - “I thought it was very affirming”
  - “It was really all about the collaboration”
- Content enhanced understanding of HIB (4/4)
  - “It at least gave us a place to say what we don’t know about”
- Content was aligned with state standards (4/4)
  - “We had heard it before but still needed it clarified”
  - “I think what you guys did was perfectly aligned”
- Workshop activities were engaging (4/4)
  - “Yeah, they were good”
  - “I thought they were all very engaging, the style of it”
  - “You changed it up enough”
  - “Helpful to do in workshop and bring back to implement”
- Workshops built on previously acquired knowledge (4/4)
  - “It built on what little we knew”
  - “I think it flowed very naturally and smoothly from here’s the law to here’s our plan”
  - “It was pretty seamless”
- Learning was directed towards a recognizable goal (3/4)
  - “We presented [our plan] to our staff and superintendent”

- “Our plan was used as a presentation to our board of ed”
- “It guided us in planning how to address the law”

**3. What, if any, limitations do participants perceive BPI to have over other types of professional development they have used?**

**General Limitations**

- Length of travel to Rutgers was problematic (1/4)

**Structural Feature Limitations**

- Year-long duration was difficult for non-administrators (2/4)
  - “I couldn’t pull my ABSs anymore”
  - “Hard for building-based staff”
  - “Situations made it so staff couldn’t come”
  - “Would have been helpful to have had more VPs or administrators”
- More face-to-face time was needed (2/4)
  - “I could have used more time”
  - “I didn’t have time for the consultation as much as I would have liked”
- On-site consultation was not necessary (1/4)
  - “I don’t feel we really needed that”
- More time was needed working with our district team (1/4)
  - “We need more time of just each team working together”
- Having more administrators on our team would have been helpful (3/4)
  - “I would request principals go as well”
  - “Would have been helpful to have had more VPs or administrators”
  - “We didn’t have an administrator on our team and I think that should probably be a requirement. An administrator can require, I can only suggest.”

**Core Feature Limitations**

- There was too much content to go through in the time allotted (2/4)
  - “There was a lot and it sometimes needed to be sifted out”
  - “We had more info than you could talk about”
  - “I didn’t like having to pick one or the other [breakout sessions]”
- More time could have been spent on the legal aspects of HIB (1/4)
  - “Could have been more emphasis on the legal aspect”
  - “Learned more legally from Strauss Essay”

- Tasks and goals were not always clear (1/4)
  - “The needs assessment became something that we couldn’t deal with on our own. We needed to be given something”

**4. Do program participants believe that they will be able to successfully implement comprehensive bullying plans? If not, why? *What do participants see as the obstacles to implementation?***

- Our district will be able to successfully implement the plan developed with BPI in the future (4/4)
- We have only been able to implement pieces of our plan to this point (4/4)
  - “We found out through our needs assessment... that we were doing everything really well”
  - “Using half of the prevention/intervention strategies we planned to use”
  - “We’re using pieces, that’s the only downside”
  - “Did a lot of work and great plan, but not enough time to get everybody on board to implement in September”
  - “We’ll get to it eventually”
- I have not had and do not foresee barriers to implementation (1/4)
- We have found barriers to our implementation (3/4)
  - Getting administrators on board (2/4)
  - Time (1/4)
  - New focus instead of bullying (e.g., common core standards, teacher evaluations system) (1/4)
  - Logistical issues (e.g., meeting time) (2/4)

**5. Do districts believe that their participation in BPI will lead to changes in school practices and school climate? If not, why?**

- Participating in BPI has helped lead to changes in school practices and school climate (2/4)
  - “I like to think that all of our efforts contribute to positive school climate”
  - “It has guided where we’re going and we’re able to look back”
- I do not know if BPI has led to a change in school practices and school climate (2/4)
  - “I’m not sure”
  - “We’re a work in progress”
- Participating in BPI has helped lead to lower incidence of HIB in our district (3/4)

- “They’re relatively low now because we’re a small district”
- “I think so”
- “Definitely. Building a common culture and using character ed”
- “There are lots of things contributing to the lower incidence”

**6. Do participants believe that participating in BPI significantly enhanced their knowledge of bullying prevention, intervention, and the school-change process?**

- BPI enhanced knowledge of bullying prevention (4/4)
  - “Helped with the prevention piece a lot”
  - “Good information and resources”
  - “Listening to what other people were doing gave us a lot of ideas”
- BPI enhanced knowledge of bullying intervention (3/4)
  - “There could have been more on the intervention”
  - “I think it’s beyond the scope of the teachers sometimes”
  - “Helped with embracing the bystander”
- BPI enhanced knowledge of the school change process (4/4)
  - “We’re pretty secure in that”
  - “BPI really helped us with our needs assessment”
  - “We’re comfortable with the whole process”
  - “I could apply it to another problem”