Examining the Montessori Lower Elementary Education as Pedagogy for Peace: A Study of an Alternative Framework to Address Bullying in Schools

Vanessa M. Rigaud
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Examining the Montessori Lower Elementary Education as Pedagogy for Peace: A Study of an Alternative Framework to Address Bullying in Schools

Abstract
Bullying among students continues to be a problem in schools and the numbers of incidents are increasing. There is an urgent need to find solutions to address this crisis in the United States. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of curriculum in shaping educational policy as an effective framework to address the social concerns of bullying in the 21st century. The research focuses on Montessori education as pedagogy for peace and on how the Montessori lower elementary curriculum addresses bullying. In addition, the study analyzes the Montessori peace initiatives with the policy implications of the New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), enacted in July 2012, as a law attempting to address bullying through enforcement and monitoring. The Montessori lower elementary education is investigated in the study using a mixed methods approach. This method allowed the gathering of rich data. It brought clarity and understanding to key initiatives discovered in the Montessori lower elementary educational model. The teacher survey, the faculty focus group, and the head of school interviews provided insight into the salient issue of bullying in schools. The findings presents evidence that Montessori serves as a model that is comprehensive. All components of Montessori, when combined, create an environment that succeeds at preventing and addressing bullying in Montessori lower elementary classrooms. The implications of these findings are significant and have the potential to bring great insight to DASA, as a new policy.

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Examining the Montessori Lower Elementary Education as Pedagogy for Peace:
A Study of an Alternative Framework to Address Bullying in Schools

By
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of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by
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St. John Fisher College

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Dedication

The completion of this dissertation and my doctoral program was made possible with the love, support, and encouragement of my family, colleagues, cohort, doctoral team and friends. You were instrumental and inspirational in assisting me realize my educational aspirations.

To my family, Mom, Dad, Nathalie, and Sergio, who provide unconditional love and support me in all my life endeavors, you are the wind beneath my wings!!

To my friends, who are always my cheerleaders, your interest in my study, the simple gestures of love, and your continued support guided me throughout this journey. I am forever grateful for the wonderful friendships.

To my Head of School, Christopher Vicari, who gave time and energy in editing, provided feedback, supported and enabled me to stay committed to completing my dissertation seven thousand miles away from home. Thanks a million!!

A special thanks to Dr. Ronald Valenti, Dr. Patricia Mason, Dr. Janice Kelly and all my professors, who supported me and challenged me to achieve my greatest potential. I express my sincere gratitude to my Dissertation Chair Dr. Frances Wills, and my committee member Dr. C. Michael Robinson, for your patience, expertise, guidance, persistence, encouragement and supportive care in completing my dissertation. I could not have accomplished this enormous task and reach this milestone without your support.
Biographical Sketch

Vanessa M. Rigaud is currently the Director of Academic Affairs at the Qingdao Amerasia International School in Qingdao, China. Ms. Rigaud attended Long Island University/C.W. Post and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science/International Relations in 1999. She attended Hofstra University from 2001-2003 and graduated with a Master of Science degree in Education in 2003. She came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2010 and began her doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Ms. Rigaud pursued her research in public policy, program evaluation, and leadership under the direction of Dr. Frances Wills and Dr. C. Michael Robinson and received the Ed.D. degree in 2012.
Abstract

Bullying among students continues to be a problem in schools and the numbers of incidents are increasing. There is an urgent need to find solutions to address this crisis in the United States. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of curriculum in shaping educational policy as an effective framework to address the social concerns of bullying in the 21st century. The research focuses on Montessori education as pedagogy for peace and on how the Montessori lower elementary curriculum addresses bullying. In addition, the study analyzes the Montessori peace initiatives with the policy implications of the New York State Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), enacted in July 2012, as a law attempting to address bullying through enforcement and monitoring.

The Montessori lower elementary education is investigated in the study using a mixed methods approach. This method allowed the gathering of rich data. It brought clarity and understanding to key initiatives discovered in the Montessori lower elementary educational model. The teacher survey, the faculty focus group, and the head of school interviews provided insight into the salient issue of bullying in schools.

The findings presents evidence that Montessori serves as a model that is comprehensive. All components of Montessori, when combined, create an environment that succeeds at preventing and addressing bullying in Montessori lower elementary classrooms. The implications of these findings are significant and have the potential to bring great insight to DASA, as a new policy.
The examination of the Montessori lower elementary education model brings a new framework in which to consider the bullying crisis in the United States. Now is the time to bring insight and perspicacity to the DASA, which is a policy for children of New York State.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

The educational system in the United States faces the troubling fact that conflict and violence are on the rise in schools and communities (Olweus, 2009). The social-emotional and academic needs of children are changing in the twenty-first century (Goleman, 1995). In 2010, Olweus’s research revealed that approximately 2.7 million children are being bullied each year. According to recent studies, the universal declaration of aggression is bullying; the findings showed that 30% to 40% of children in the United States admit to being adversely affected by some form of bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2008). In spite of this evidence of increasing violence, the United States educational system has allowed children’s social and emotional development in school to take a back seat in the past decade (Johnson, 2001). For over 20 years, polices have been implemented to address the issue of bullying; however, the problem of bullying continues to soar. “The bullying statistics for 2011 reveal that bullying is a crime that is not going away anytime soon. There are about 160,000 children that miss school every day out of fear of being bullied” (Statistics, 2012). With an increase in confrontations among peers and chronic displays of maladaptive social and emotional skills, schools nationwide have been forced to engage in finding solutions to a growing crisis in the United States (Cross, 2005).

As the educational system faces a “quiet crisis” of bullying, children are confronting the reality that their learning environment is not safe (Garbarino & deLara,
Bullying among children has been unnoticed and dismissed in schools because it is not reported (Bradshaw, O'Brennan, & Sawyer, 2008). Many victims of bullying suffer in silence and try to make sense of the experience, but when it cannot be resolved, some children find themselves emotionally lost and depressed. Last year alone, there were 34 documented suicides related to bullying (Gregory, 2012). Many schools are no longer safe places where children can learn and develop their skills. Children cannot escape violence because it permeates the hallways, the classroom, the locker rooms, the playgrounds, and bus stops.

In the United States, billions of dollars are spent each year on anti-bullying programs, policies, regulations and laws; however, remarkably little improvement has been made in resolving the bullying issues in schools (Gregory, 2012). This calls for decisive action to abate the vulnerability to bullying. Many researchers believed that this can be done by instituting an affective discipline model in school curricula across the nation (Goleman, 1995; Lantieri 2008; Olweus, 2010). Studies have found that bullying can be prevented if emotional literacy is implemented in the curriculum of school systems (Aber, Lawrence, & Jones, 2003; Cooke, & Quamma, 1995; Elias & Clabby, 1992; Goldman, 1995; Greenberg, Kusche, Grossman, et al., 1997; Van Schoiack Edstom, Frey, & Beland, 2002). The previous statement gives us powerful ammunition to fight for a new future of curriculum that includes educating the whole child. “We can no longer turn away from the emotional fabric of children’s lives or believe that learning can take place isolated from their feelings” (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). According to Spencer (1850), “education has for its object the formation of character.” Children need to be
taught how to work together, manage their emotions, resolve conflict and embrace differences in a caring and loving way in schools (Gregory, 2012).

There has been further evidence that social and emotional development is a key component of the curriculum that can also be a powerful motivator in the cognitive performance of children (Cross, 2005). Social and emotional development in the early years of a child’s life can play a vital role in diminishing psychosocial crisis during the adolescent years (Cross, 2005). With these recent spotlights on increased violence and conflict among children, Lantieri (2008) argued that there is a need to provide children the skills to achieve social and emotional development by embedding an affective domain in the academic curriculum. According to Goleman (1995), the relationship of the school environment and children’s perception of their experiences can define their self-concept. Goleman’s theory aligned with the current research. His clinical practice suggested that schools must understand that the social and emotional environment plays a pivotal role in the prevention of bullying. We need practices that work and will reduce the cases of bullying in the United States (Gregory, 2012).

To expand the repertoire of practices that may reduce bullying and violence in schools, the dissertation study examined the Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy for peace. Understanding the impact of the Montessori lower elementary education program on the social and emotional development of children ages six through nine provided insight into the affective domain and how it addresses bullying in the twenty-first century. The study analyzed the ways children respond to bullying in the Montessori environment and how the Montessori educational model and pedagogy seek to address the root of a child’s anger before it becomes an outward expressed through
aggression and hostility. Hence, the study offered significant implications for policymakers, administrators, and teachers searching for evidence-based research on the implementation of affective domains in curriculum to address the social and emotional needs of children while developing strategies to address bullying in their schools.

Problem Statement

As bullying among students has continued to be a problem in schools, there is an urgent need for solutions. The incidents of bullying over the past decade have demonstrated that children are vulnerable, and the need for intervention in schools is imperative. The problem of bullying is evident by the growing cases of incidents throughout the United States in cities such as Columbine, Colorado; Pearl, Mississippi; Jonesboro, Tennessee; Fayetteville, Arkansas; Moses Lake, Washington; Springfield, Oregon; and Paduka, Kentucky (Johnson, 2001). In Santee, California, Charles Andrew killed two and wounded thirteen other students at Santana High School. The young man retaliated against his oppressors who teased and taunted him every day (Johnson, 2001). After his arrest, he told investigators that he was tired of being bullied.

In 2010, Clementi, an eighteen-year-old freshman at Rutgers’s University, committed suicide after he learned that his roommate had recorded his intimate encounter with another man and revealed to the world on Facebook that he was gay (Parker, 2012). Clementi ended his life by jumping off New York’s George Washington Bridge because he could not face bear the intensity of public humiliation (Parker, 2012).

The Columbine High School massacre in 1999 is one of the deadliest mass murders on a school campus in the United States. The shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado brought the issue of violence and conflict in schools to the
forefront of the national dialogue. Two American high school seniors, Eric David Harris and Dylan Bennet Klebold were responsible for the killings at Columbine High School. These two victims of bullying displayed their anger towards their bullies by killing 13, injuring 24 and killing themselves. This grave incident resulted in a rude national awakening that bullying is a crisis in schools (Larkin, 2007). As the world watched the fatal aftermath on television, many people assumed that the massacre at Columbine was an isolated incident. Most people did not see the correlation with bullying (Larkin, 2007). Children who have been a victim of bullying are shown to be prone to become bullies themselves (Larkin, 2007).

The fatal shooting of 20 children and 6 adults at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut was the second-deadliest elementary massacre (Gabbatt, 2012). On December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza, age 20, shot and killed his mother before arriving at Sandy Hook. When he arrived at the elementary school, he shot first grade students and teachers and then committed suicide (Gabbatt, 2012).

Only a month after the Sandy Hook shootings, there was another shooting at Taft High School in California. A 16 year old came to school with a shotgun intending to kill two students who had been bullying him (Simmons, 2013). He shot the first student, who went to the hospital in critical condition. He attempted to shoot another student and missed. A teacher confronted the armed adolescent, convinced him drop his weapon, and to surrender to the police (Simmons, 2013).

While the aforementioned events gained international media attention for their extreme violence, there are mundane, daily expressions of bullying in schools and neighborhoods that go unrecorded but are equally damaging. Providing insight into how
to create preventative measures will have much more significant positive impact on children and society (Olweus, 2003). Condemning all the bullies would be easy except that the problem is much greater and multifaceted. There are many faces of bullies that defy the two decade old stereotypical image of a big, mean-spirited male. Although many bullies ridicule and exercise physical harm to others, Cross (2001) provided a broader definition:

a person who uses any approach at his or her disposal including, but not limited to intimidation (physical, emotional, verbal) positional authority, relational authority, or societal authority to create limiting effects on another’s behavior, thoughts or feelings. (p. 36)

This comprehensive definition shows how easily one can disrupt the lives of others, without distinctions of gender, race, ethnicity, or physiological characteristics. Bullies can be found across all groups (Cross, 2001). It is essential that lessons be learned by examining the events of Columbine and other similar bullying incidents. These critical incidents call for the educational system to undertake increased responsibility to educate the whole child and not just utilize a “Band-Aid” approach to solve the thorny issue of bullying (Cross, 2005).

To better understand Columbine, Larkin (2007) discussed the rage children face because of bullying in schools. There was a strong dilemma of outcast groups at Columbine High School, which resulted in the shooting (Larkin, 2007). The outcast group members were viewed as “nerds”. These students experienced intimidation and harassment by bullies and spoke of their feelings of outrage and injustice that occurred prior to the shooting (Larkin, 2007).
Most recently, in the case of the “Nine Teens Charged with Bullying in Girl’s Suicide,” Hargrove (2010) explained how “from the first day of High School at South Hadley, Massachusetts, Phoebe Prince, 15 years of age, was harassed and bullied unmercifully” (p. 39). Both Phoebe and her parents made numerous complaints that resulted in teachers and administrators saying kids will be kids (Hargrove, 2010). No one intervened, stating Phoebe’s treatment was normal (Hargrove 2010). Now Phoebe is dead because no one took action or responsibility to resolve the issue of bullying (Hargrove, 2010).

This is another example of the alarming threat of bullying that is occurring in schools. Surprisingly, the bullying behavior begins occurring as early as first grade (Hargrove, 2010). Shuler (2002) described a second grade boy screaming out “Shut Up! Stop Humiliating Me!” (p. 1). The child was an avid reader. The other children would tease and tattle on him saying that he was reading and not completing his work (Shuler, 2002). These negative comments and taunting caused resentment and anger to develop after repeated attacks. Often children find themselves trapped as a victim of bullying (Hargrove, 2010).

The bullying narratives provided evidence to the importance of the evaluative role of schools in establishing evidence-based affective domain in curriculum (Cross, 2005). Goleman (2008) suggested that assisting children to develop appropriate social and emotional skills early in schools will create opportunities for engaging in caring and respectful relationships, thus making it more likely that children avoid depression and violence. We need to allow children to work on fundamental social skills, emotional development, and character development (Gregory, 2012). Now is the time to address the
fatal issue of bullying in education. Parents, administrators, policy makers, and teachers must be committed to finding solutions, get to the root of the problem at hand and help all children thrive (Olweus, 2003). The educational system has a duty to develop skills in children and to stop bullying before it ends in tragedies like Columbine, South Hadley, and other similar events (Rimm, 2008).

**Theoretical Rationale**

The theoretical framework of the dissertation study stemmed from the overarching work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) that offers the basis for a social ecology of human development. The theory of social ecology of human development served as a guide, bringing considerable depth and comprehension to the study. Bronfenbrenner’s work emphasized the role of critical environmental components. These environmental components explain the complexity of human development and what encourages growth and development of the whole child.

**The ecological systems theory.** Bronfenbrenner described his system as a Russian nesting doll where each layer is an overcoat for the previous level. The smallest doll represents the center of this theory. The individual doll symbolizes the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The interrelated system places the individual at the center, and each outer layer represents the different ecological systems that impact the individual child’s development. According to Bronfenbrenner’s theory (1979), the child stands as the central component of his/her social network and is surrounded by five interconnecting layers: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

There is an active interplay between the levels of this ecological system. The innermost nucleus is where the child has direct relations with his/her immediate
surroundings: family, peers, and school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). While still being part of
the center, the interplay of the microsystem leads to connections between family and
school practices, school and church, and family and peers. In the third level, the
mesosystem, the child experiences influences from the outside. The child may not have
direct relations with these contexts; however, the contexts have an impact on the child’s
development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For instance, local government agencies finance
the construction of local parks in their community where the child can develop physically
and socially. The fourth level, the macrosystem, contains attitudes and ideologies of
culture which also affect from afar (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The recently added
chronosystem is the outermost level where environmental events form patterns over a
period of time, such as religion, laws, and regulations. The child develops a responsive
behavior to address the event that has occurred illustrating elements of the
chronosystemic level. Bronfenbrenner (1979) further stated that both the environment
and biology influence each other through exchanges among this nesting system, creating
a powerful effect that shapes a child’s development.

Within Bronfenbrenner’s micro and mesosystem are the dynamics of the
relationships that children encounter in the school and community setting. The role of
school curriculum as expressed in the school environment and through explicit teaching
has been identified as having a significant impact on students’ social-emotional and
behavioral expression (Greenberg, et al., 2003).

In the history of public education, curricula problems and shortcomings have been
addressed through the voice of public policy. Scholarship on curriculum theory and
development has profoundly influenced practice and policy development. The process of
curriculum development resembles the phases of policy design and aligns with the
government’s interest in constructing educational policies. Policies, laws, and regulations
as depicted in Bronfenbrenner’s chronosystem level can indirectly affect the lives of
children.

During a well-publicized critical incident, an issue such as bullying becomes
recognized as worthy of being placed on the political agenda. In fact, this is what has
occurred in the past several years. In this iterative process, outputs influence inputs; for
example, media coverage, parent advocacy, and school administrators’ statements of
concern have aroused a national response that, in turn, has influenced the political
outlook. In the case of bullying, public reaction leads to policies, laws, and regulations.
Birkland (2011) offered the challenge of looking at policies that have been enacted
recognizing that there may be gaps in the political system when there is a reactive
approach to a crisis. He also explained that there are various steps to ensure that policies
meet the needs of the problem; however, the process is often not followed through and is
used as a way to silence the political agenda (Birkland, 2011).

One legislative effort called “New York State Dignity for All Students Act 2012
(DASA),” came as a direct result of pressure from “outputs” influencing “inputs”. The
anti-bullying intervention continues efforts to make twenty-first century schools “bully
proof” by having teachers and administrators clearly describe policies against bullying
behavior to students. This often has been referred to as the “direct approach” to bullying
intervention. In the direct approach, bullying is addressed in a reactive manner.
Conversely, there have been recent studies that suggest bullying should be examined
from a social-ecological framework (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010).
While legislation attempts to be proactive and preventative, it has ignored the root issues of bullying, which are socio-ecological in nature, and are the result of the interplay between adults and children, as seen in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model (Criag & Pepler, 2003). Therefore, in the end, legislation ends up merely being reactive in nature. Scholars argued that there needs to be a proactive approach to bullying where a “positive atmosphere can be created and where cohesive interpersonal relationships can form” (Criag & Pepler, 2003 p.). The anti-bullying policy makers can set goals and hope for predictable outcomes in the future of evolving public policy. However, without a deep understanding of the root cause and a comprehensive analysis, anti-bullying policy is just a design (Birkland, 2011).

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of the dissertation study was to examine the role of curriculum in shaping educational policy as an effective framework to address the social concerns of bullying in the twenty-first century. The research focused on Montessori education as pedagogy for peace and on how the Montessori lower elementary curriculum addresses bullying, a serious social problem in schools across the nation. In addition, the study analyzed the Montessori peace initiatives in respect to the policy implications of DASA, a New York State law that attempts to address bullying through enforcement and monitoring. The study attempted to demonstrate how policy could adopt an embedded social emotional curriculum such as a peace curriculum to prevent bullying. The study sought to demonstrate that a curriculum designed for social and emotional development fosters an environment that encourages healthy and positive interactions among children.
The dissertation study provides educators, administrators, parents, and policy-makers in the United States insight into the influence of the Montessori lower elementary cosmic education curriculum as pedagogy for peace and substantiates its effective response to bullying for the past 100 years. The study is useful in guiding leaders in public education in evaluating policies, programs, and curricula present in the school systems. Additionally, it offers solutions to the critical issue of bullying in the twenty-first century.

Research Questions

The study examined the Montessori education in the lower elementary program as pedagogy of peace and its potential to influence the way bullying is addressed in the twenty-first century using a concurrent triangular methodology. In addition, the study resulted in the development of a matrix showing how the characteristics of the Montessori framework can be a pathway to the regulatory components of the DASA, the anti-bullying policy enacted in 2012 in New York State. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does the Montessori curriculum serve to address social concerns of bullying in the twenty-first century?
   a. What does the Montessori peace education initiative look like as an integral component of the Montessori lower elementary educational model?
   b. How does the Montessori “peace education initiative” address bullying in schools?
2. What role can the Montessori lower elementary educational model play in shaping effective policy to address the critical issue of bullying in schools?
   a. What are the similarities and differences between the Montessori model of education and the New York State “Dignity for All Students Act 2012,” legislation as frameworks for addressing bullying in the school?
   b. What can we learn about shaping effective bully prevention policies from examining the role of Montessori curriculum as it addresses social concerns?

Significance of the Study

In an effort to address the growing concern of bullying, a study was conducted to examine the current Montessori lower elementary education program as a framework for addressing the problem of bullying through a curriculum that embeds a social-emotional component. Analysis of the data yielded useful and relevant information on constructs of an affective domain in curricula for educators, administrators, and parents.

The dissertation research challenges the current policies, laws, and regulations related to the issue of bullying in schools. In addition, the study adds to the research on the Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy of peace. The analysis of the data yielded useful and relevant information on the constructs and practices of the Montessori lower elementary educational model as an affective domain of curricula attending to bullying in the twenty-first century. The findings suggested policy ramifications. Billions of dollars have been spent in education hoping to provide programs, laws, polices, and regulations to address bullying; nevertheless, the dilemma
has continued in schools (Gregory, 2012). There is a need to reframe our lens and start thinking about preventive and preemptive ways to address bullying.

The study addressed the prevailing social issue of bullying in schools across the nation. With the expansion of Montessori education throughout the United States, there has been greater desire to adequately consider and evaluate programs intended to alter the troubling trends of bullying in schools (Mathews, 2007).

Olweus (2009) affirmed the need for an affective domain in the curriculum as it is one of the most effective approaches to address the issue of bullying. Greenberg et al. (2003) stated that there is a reliable and growing body of evidence-based research indicating that social and emotional development in schools has a direct influence on a variety of social issues. These researchers also suggested that future research must begin to examine school bullying through the lens of social and emotional development of children (Greenberg, et al., 2003).

Schools often overlook or ignore the corollary implications of a peaceful environment on social and emotional development of children (Goleman, 2008). Most states by law require anti-bullying programs in schools. However, there has been extremely little information on whether these programs and policies have been proven effective in schools (Gregory, 2012). With an affective domain woven into the curriculum such as peace, children gain skills, which allow them to relate well with their peers, express themselves effectively, and affirm themselves in response to bullying or brace themselves against bullying (Goleman, 2008; Olweus, 2003).

Data collected from the study provides Montessori schools, scholars, and teachers with information on how Montessori education is attending to bullying in the twenty-first
century. In addition, this research examined the DASA, a law that hopes to address the issue of bullying in New York schools in the twenty-first century and considered how the law can align with the Montessori education that has been present in the United States since 1911. The study provides institutions with the essential tools to promote growth and development of the whole child while providing a safe and nurturing environment for children, throughout their educational journeys.

**Definitions of Terms**

**Affective domain in curriculum.** Affective education “seeks to enhance student’s success in attitudes, interest, character, values, and other areas within the social-emotional domain. It is evident in programs such as moral education, character education, conflict resolution, social skills development, self-awareness, and other related areas” (The Association of Teacher Educators, 2006, p. i).

**Bullying.** Bullying is an act where “a person who uses any approach at his or her disposal including, but not limited to intimidation (physical, emotional, verbal) positional authority, relational authority, or societal authority to create limiting effects on other behaviors, thoughts, or feelings” (Cross, 2001, p. 36).

**Environmentalism.** Locke’s (1690) theory stated that an individual’s environment is more influential than heredity in determining his or her development.

**The Montessori Peace Initiatives.** The Montessori Peace Education is a multifaceted program woven into the Montessori educational framework. It “recognizes the intrinsic value of the child’s personality and provides an environment suited to spiritual growth”. Hence, this program encourages children to be peaceful within
themselves, with others, and the environment; leading the child to add to the advancement of the world (Montessori, 1949, pp. 21-22; McFarland, 2005).

Chapter Summary

The first chapter gave an overview and background of the dissertation study, articulated the problem statement, purpose, and significance of the study, and delineated the research questions that guided the study. To build the case for the research, the theoretical framework provided a conceptual model for the study and the literature review. This foundation offered an in-depth look at the theories behind the social and emotional development of children. Chapter 2 discussed the research studies that apply the theoretical framework of environmentalism, sociocultural theory, social and emotional development theory, and personal talent theory. The literature review encompassed the perspective provided by the grand theory of this study, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory. The social and emotional needs of children, their affective curricular needs, the history of curriculum in the United States, and school bullying in the twenty-first century were examined through the lens of the ecological system theory. Curriculum theory and research on the policy development process guided the examination of the DASA, and Montessori lower elementary education.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction and Purpose

The escalating violence in schools associated with bullying is alarming and has created serious concerns and urgency throughout the American educational system. The shocking incident that occurred at Columbine High School in 1999 exposed bullying as a disturbing issue that cannot be ignored. Since then, there have been other incidents revealing the escalation of violence and conflict in schools. Researchers have argued that the absence of a curriculum to address social and emotional development in school has allowed the culture of violence to permeate the educational system making school unsafe and frightening for children (Aber et al., 2003; Coleman & Cross, 2001; Greenberg et al., 1995; Greenberg et al., 2003; Grolssman et al., 1997). This crisis calls for action among educational leaders, administrators, policy makers, teachers, parents, and children.

Recent studies of bullying have shown clear evidence that an affective curriculum needs to be present to manage change and resolve the crisis of bullying in schools (Greenberg et al., 2003; Greenberg et al., 1995; Goldman, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Mucherah, Lapsley, Miels, & Horton, 2004). To comprehend the role of affective curricula in preventing and addressing bullying and violence in schools, the dissertation study analyzed the Montessori lower elementary peace education. Introduced in 1897, the Montessori peace education continues to provide a valuable perspective on how a social-emotional component embedded in curricula has served as a preventative approach to bullying and violence in schools.
Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature, examining both the theoretical orientation and significant empirical studies in the field (Roberts, 2004; Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). In the literature review, the dissertation study takes a look at the theoretical framework of environmentalism, sociocultural theory, social and emotional development theory, and personal talent theory. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory served as the grand theory of the study. His theory provided a lens through which to analyze the empirical findings of the major topics examined in the dissertation study: the history of curriculum in the America, curriculum development and influence on policy, the New York State Dignity of All Students Act 2012 (DASA), social and emotional development of children, components of affective curriculum, bullying, Montessori’s educational program, and peace education in the Montessori classroom.

Gathering new knowledge on this topic is critical as the issue of bullying continues to occur in schools across the United States. The review of the literature allowed the study to focus on key concepts that emerged from both theory and practice. The purpose and scope of the literature review was to gain an in-depth understanding of social and emotional development, ecological systems of bullying, affective curricula, Montessori peace education, and how these concepts are interconnected. Thorough examination of the key topics was vital to establish a core understanding of how the Montessori lower elementary education is pedagogy for peace in the midst of violence and bullying in the twenty-first century.

**Topic Analysis**

The theoretical framework of this study stemmed from the works of Locke, Vygotsky, Dabrowski, Moon, and Bronfenbrenner. An overview of these theories
addresses the key latent variables found in the dissertation study and served as the foundation for the study. The theory of social ecology of human development guide and unites these theorists, thus bringing greater understanding and insight to the study.

The works of John Locke and Lev Vygotsky provide insight into the early foundations of social development in children. Dabrowski (1967) shed light on a complex theory of social and emotional development and demonstrated the ways children benefit from an affective domain in curricula, specifically in enhancing their character and personality. Moon’s (2003) theory of personal talent built a scaffold for affective domain in curricula. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory emerged from the field of social psychology. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the ecological model describes five environmental nesting systems ranging from smaller contributions of explicit exchanges with social instruments to broader contributions of culture.

**Theory of the environment.** Locke’s (1690) theory of human development provided a historical foundation for the theoretical framework guiding the dissertation research. John Locke, considered the father of learning theory, pioneered the theory of environmentalism during the 1690s. As a 17th century enlightenment theorist, he led the way for theorists, scholars, and researchers who would later challenge his work and find inconsistencies in his theories (Crain, 2000). Nevertheless, Locke was among the first to shift the view of childhood from preformationism, which portrayed children as miniature adults during the Middle Ages to seeing childhood as a unique stage of human development (Crain, 2000). His theory provided clarity and insight on the strong influence of the environment on social development of children.
Locke’s (1690) theory of human development focused on his insight that a person’s development came from the environment. He acknowledged that innate emotions existed as the source of intrinsic fundamental differences and uniqueness among people. Locke defined the process whereby the environment exerts its impact on social development. He argued the link occurs when thoughts and feelings arise either through a positive experience that brings joy or a negative experience that brings pain.

The influential publication, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (Locke 1693) contained his principles on education. These principles became the cornerstone of modern day teaching, bringing to the forefront the facilitation of education as the basis for social development and academic achievement (Crain, 2000). Locke (1690) emphasized the need to develop an educational program allowing children to seek knowledge to satisfy their natural curiosity. Evolving from his theory, was the idea of a child’s mind as being a “Tabula Rasa,” or “a blank-slate.” Locke saw children developing their social and emotional needs through the combination of external experiences and their own intellectual powers (Locke, 1690). He noted that people can learn through self-reflection and that there are inherent emotions that indicate differences among individuals.

Locke’s (1693) educational philosophy was grounded in the formation of the child’s social development with a great emphasis on character development while recognizing the impact of modeling and teaching. He emphasized the importance of nurturing the child’s natural curiosity. Furthermore, he believed in the child’s curiosity as the guiding point for learning, which in turn gives the child the power to reason and solve
problems. Locke (1693) viewed education as a social process where children develop social skills to become successful in society.

As a pioneering theorist, Locke (1693) guided the movement of constructing knowledge through external experiences. Subsequent theorists acknowledged his work as they broadened his theory of environmental influence on social and emotional development and cognitive achievement (Crain, 2000). Locke’s ideas on social development have continued to influence education in twenty-first century classrooms (Crain, 2000).

**Sociocultural theory.** Vygotsky presented a modern constructivist approach wherein the social environment is a key component of social development and cognitive learning (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003). Vygotsky challenged Locke’s theory that while the environment could exert influence on a child’s development, the child could not influence the environment. Instead, Vygotsky contended that people have the ability to modify their environment for their own intentions (Gredler & Shields, 2008). Vygotsky’s work was radical as he worked to create a theory that allowed for the interplay between internal influences and external influences on a child. Rather than dismiss the internal or the external influences on development, Vygotsky balanced the two stating that there exists a “dialectical interplay” (Vygotsky, 1976).

Vygotsky (1976) emphasized the interaction between the interpersonal (social), cultural-historical, and the individual factors of human development. He explained that these interactions transform children’s experiences based on their prior knowledge, characteristics, and the reorganization of their cognitive structures (Schunk, 2008).
Vygotsky had a strong interest in the association between learning and development (Schunk, 2008). His studies revealed that the environment plays an important role in learning and in the social interactions that transform a child’s thinking (Gredler & Shields, 2008). Furthermore, Vygotsky (1986) argued that as the child progresses in age, the dialogues become internal which contributes to the power of thought. Vygotsky’s (1986) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), captures the process through which a child learns and contains elements that can be found in an affective curriculum. As such, sociocultural theory provided a comprehensive approach to how children learn by staging the right conditions (Schunk, 2008). According to Vygotsky (1986):

ZPD is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined by independent problem solving under adult guidance and in collaboration with more capable peers (p. 86).

In addition, Vygotsky (1986) claimed collaborative work among teachers and learners allows two things to happen in the ZPD: shared knowledge that contributes to social development and instruction between an apprentice and master (Schunk, 2008). The use of the ZPD theory for understanding social development relied heavily on the teacher’s role in providing assistance. Hence, the adults’ function has become an important variable in this model (Gredler & Shields, 2008). The impact of the social environment on growth and development are the potential consequences of affective domain, which becomes evident within the curriculum and impacts on a child’s growth.
Social and emotional development theory. The Sociocultural Theory discussed in the previous section provided guidance in understanding the process for children’s holistic development, while Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD) added a new dimension to social and emotional development exclusively (Mendaglio, 2008). The theory captures the experiences of children and makes them more comprehensive. His opinion is widely referenced by many in the field of education.

Dabrowski’s theory perceived emotional development as a critical component of human life (Piechowski, 2003). There are five levels of emotional development in TPD, mapped on a continuum from low to high. These levels in TPD illustrated the process of development whereby the lower-level cognitive-emotional structure is segmented but later reconstructed by higher-level personality attributes (Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002). The experience with crisis and disintegration builds to self-mastery over time, allowing the individual to grow and acquire skills necessary to reach the highest level. These have been considered normal processes in the levels of emotional development. (Piechowski, 2003). Dabrowski’s theory of Disintegration described the quest for self-efficacy as a system where individuals develop internally by life’s experiences, as shown in Figure 2.1. Dabrowski’s five levels of emotional development consist of varied forms of personality functioning. At the first level, the individual finds the characteristics of self-interest; egocentrism where the presence of both empathy and self-reflection is lacking. Advancing to level two brings lack of self-direction, which leads to the pressure of group and peer values.
Figure 2.1. Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration: Levels of emotional development.

Once the person arrives at the third level—Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration, the emergence of a higher level of character development becomes apparent through self-examination and internal conflict between the previous levels and the current one. Thus, the internal struggles set the context for future transformation allowing the individual to continue toward self-actualization in level four and self-mastery in level five (Mendaglio, 2008).

In his clinical work, Dabrowski observed that children often find themselves conflicted with the demands and expectations of the external environment (Neihart et al., 2002). Dabrowski viewed conflict and tension as necessary for success. His positive disintegration theory has drawn attention and continues to be used by many in education (Van-Tassel-Baska et al., 2009). Dabrowski’s principles and ideologies provided convincing evidence that social and emotional development is a primary motivator in the cognitive performance of children as well.
Personal talent theory. The theory of personal talent has played a significant role in the affective domain of curricula for gifted children. With a deeper understanding of personal talent theory, educators are better able to serve the social and emotional needs of gifted children (Moon, 2003). The complexity of children’s lives, as Vygotsky pointed out in his theory of ZPD, makes it challenging for individuals to achieve life goals, and thus, happiness. Hence, the role of personal talent theory in children is essential for gifted children (Moon, 2003). Sidney Moon (2003) defined personal talent as developing “exceptional ability to select and reach difficult life goals that fit one’s interests, abilities, values, and context” (p. 5). The development of talent occurs when an individual obtains information and develops skills to determine appropriate objectives to achieve his or her aspirations (Moon, 2003). When a person has achieved personal talent, he or she obviously has a deep self-understanding and can make decisions that lead to success even when faced with adversity. In goal selection, an individual must learn to find a good fit for interests, abilities, and contexts. Once the individual has selected goals, exceptional self-regulating skills facilitate the implementation of such goals.

Moon’s (2003) theory of personal talent has two components that lead to social and emotional development. In order to make sound decisions about one’s life, there must be a solid knowledge of one’s past as this influences knowledge of one’s spirit. Moon’s two components are knowledge and skills. The individual acquires knowledge and skills to encourage achievement and promote well-being. The acquisition of these two key elements can be learned and developed in schools through the affective domain of curricula or gained by self-observation (Neihart et al., 2002). Both elements must be mastered to steer the development of personal talent (Moon, 2003).
Personal talent theory provided clarity and enriched the conceptualization of characteristics of all children, explaining and giving a greater understanding of children’s social and emotional outcomes. The personal talent theory offered a powerful view of the role of motivation that Moon (2003) addressed as discrete goal sets that can be developed:

1. Developing awareness of personal interest and abilities through a variety of high-interest, warm-up activities in combination with formal and informal assessments of abilities.
2. Increasing problem-solving and decision-making abilities through sequenced experiences with both structured and unstructured problems.
3. Providing a variety of challenging learning experiences coupled with instructor feedback associated with adaptive explanatory styles for both success and failure to build the disposition associated with well-being and achievement.
4. Creating a supportive classroom climate that encourages intrinsic motivation, self-expression, and positive peer relationships.
5. Involving all students in collaborative work on independent projects.

Moon suggested that an affective domain in the curriculum will provide gifted children encouragement in developing knowledge and skills to achieve self-selected life goals. “In the case of personal talent theory, indirect approaches would teach personal talent skills through teacher modeling, creation of adaptive classroom climates, and personal talent activities embedded in the regular curriculum (Moon, 2009, p. 11).” The personal talent theory enhanced and broadened the concepts of social and emotional
development of children (Neihart et al., 2002). It “will mediate the social and emotional development of children influencing whether a particular child in a particular environment exhibits resilience or vulnerability (Moon, 2003, p. 20).” Hence, the theory built an effective framework for affective curriculum development for gifted children as a result of its stress on developing personal skills that makes possible both talent expansion and life satisfaction. “Affective curriculum should be more than fragmented collections of affective activities… affective curriculum must be comprehensive, integrated, and sound (Moon, 2009).”

**Ecology of human development.** According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings and by the larger context in which the settings are embedded. (p. 21)

The ecological principle of human development broadened the understanding of an individual as a Tabula Rasa, a blank slate, as Locke described in the 17th century. First, the child lives in an evolving, growing, dynamic process where an environment models and shapes the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Second, there is reciprocity when two-directional interactions occur while mutual accommodations emerge between the child and the environment. Third, this process is not isolated to one immediate setting, but extends to include interactions between different settings, thus allowing external influences to affect the person from different settings. Locke believed individuals are a Tabula Rasa
and that environment is the main influence on a person’s development. Bronfenbrenner, however, had a slightly different perspective. He argued that the way we are (our nature) collides with our environment (nurture) and this collision or intersection causes our development. Hence, the ecological principles of human development appear to be in agreement with Locke—that, in fact, environment shapes who we are.

In unison, these components created a nested treasury of settings, a series of concentric circles as displayed in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory (Figure 2.2). These structures are known as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem.
Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) integrated system reflects the competency or the lack of competency found in children. The interactions that occur between the child and his environment can be quite complex in nature, resulting in the development of social relationships or objectionable behaviors in children (Swearer & Doll, 2001). The transaction between the child and the environment lays the necessary foundation for the ecological approach to human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner’s theory sought to demonstrate an understanding of the environmental influences in a child’s life. It offered a developmental framework centered on the individual child. Within the ecological model, the child is an inseparable element of the social network comprised of five interrelated systems. The uniqueness of each child is also found in the diverse ecological systems. The child actively shapes his or her environment as the child encounters the external conditions found within it.
In the center circle is the microsystem. The developing child is located in the center of the nesting circles. The home, school, and peer group locations such as the park are the representative settings where the child directly interacts with the environment. “A pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations” happens at this level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). The child constructs a scene through experiences with real life events. It is through these interactions that a child develops warm and loving relationships, which build the child’s confidence in the environment. In contrast, the child who has been rejected, over protected, or abused will become detached emotionally, making it difficult for the child to interact in peer grouping locations such as the playground, the park, and the classroom. The microsystem level plays an important role in setting and promoting peer friendship and social competence. In this setting, if a young child perceives that he or she is being bullied, the child’s social and emotional development can be directly affected.

The mesosystem focuses on the interplay between the core microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The relations between these two levels allow the developing child to become an active participant. At this level, family to school, school to church, family to church, family to peer and peer to school are just a few examples of relations that exist. The impact of a home setting can have a direct influence on the child’s performance at school, while the peer influences at school can cause problems at home.

At the exosystem level, experiences have an impact on the developing child even though the child might not have a vital role (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The passive
experience can be a parent’s job, where loss of pay, traveling aboard, and stress from work can cause a child to experience social and emotional distress. Government agencies losing funding for libraries can be another example of external policies that may result in a child not having access to books, thus losing the opportunity to read.

The macrosystem is the next outermost circle. Within the macrosystem, one finds the broad ideologies, attitudes, laws, and customs of culture that influence the developing child at all stages (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For instance, a first generation American child in the United States might find conflict with his or her parents’ culture and the American democracy of free choice and open market. The struggle to resolve these issues forms and shapes the child.

In 1993, Bronfenbrenner added an extra level: the chronosystem. The chronosystem is where the patterning of events in the environment and life transitions can contribute to the different experiences for the child (1979). For example, divorce, war, or frequent movement of the parent’s job can contribute to experiences that remain with the child and model development for life.

The ecological theory is often used to understand the nature of bullying in schools (Swearer & Doll, 2001; Greenberg et al., 2003). Through the lens of the ecological system theory, bullying can be understood as the result of actions that transpire through the interplay of ecological settings. Furthermore, the substantial uniqueness of the school grounds, family factors, cultural quality, and even community factors play an active role in bullying that takes place in schools. In the dissertation study, the ecological system theory model set the groundwork for examining the impact of the Montessori lower
elementary education as an affective program of study among children and its influence within the bullying phenomenon in the twenty-first century.

The origins of curriculum in America. The American public school educational curriculum as we know it today emerged in the middle of the 1800s. Before this era, the American schoolhouse served the needs of small town communities across the United States. A teacher and a group of children varying in ages constituted the one room schoolhouse. Within that simple local model, there was autonomy to develop standards for achievements and to be responsive to the communal values of the town. There was no higher level government control dictating the lessons to be taught on a given day (Mondale & Patton, 2001).

During the nineteenth century, industrialization could be felt through the United States and led to a significant change in education. The rationale for more education became apparent with the development of the industrial revolution. The industry of the printed text grew through the evolution of the press machines (Kliebard, 2004). Furthermore, the expansion of the railroad facilitated the transportation of different means of communication. By the late 1800s, journalism included magazines and newspapers. The printed word was transported by railroad making written news accessible to all Americans (Kliebard, 2004). At the same time, the essential motivation in education resulted in a shift from the open traditional schoolhouse to a more structured framework to educate children. The voice of education became more pronounced in its role in cultivating learning.

The impact of the industrial revolution was first evident in large cities such as New York and Philadelphia where the Lancastrian System appeared in the late 1850s.
This approach “was to be a careful breakdown of the course of study into standard units of work” (Kliebard, 2004). The educational system would never be uniform but was remodeled to resemble modern day departmentalization. In addition, the nineteenth century schools were marked by the presence of a standardized curriculum by means of the first popular textbooks: the McGuffey reading series and the famous blue back spellers (Tyack, 2001). The McGuffey readers were widely used throughout the United States; over 122 million copies were purchased by schools. The McGuffey reader served two functions: it taught children how to read while embracing the morals of dominant society (Tyack, 2001). In each lesson, it was clear that the “moral tales” served to indoctrinate students through prescriptions regarding common behaviors and national ideas. The establishment of these books had a great influence on the nationalization of the curriculum in the United States, which would eventually become the preoccupation of American society. William Harvey was the first to classify children into grade levels and design the course of study for each discipline at each grade level in Chicago, in the late 1850s (Kliebard, 2004). As the country continued to advance, the demands of education increased and distinguished scholars began sharing their ideals and thoughts on education.

The transformation that occurred in the late 1850s altered the center of decision making from the teacher in the one room schoolhouse to the incarnation of the curriculum by external bodies. Various competing bodies fought to control the American curriculum (Kliebard, 2004). This process occurred gradually as scholars put forth their views on education, aspiring to change an ailing school system. As industry grew, the need for
education increased, bringing new consciousness in the educational system by the 1900s. There were different competing thoughts on the philosophy of education.

Edward L. Thorndike and many others initiated the makeover of the American educational system. Thorndike’s approach played a vital role in understanding the structure of education, bringing clarity to a complex system. He argued that psychology could facilitate a deeper awareness of how children learn. Thorndike’s theory was based on the principles of behavioral science and learning. He was among the first to acknowledge that children can be autonomous learners and launched the concept of active learning (Kliebard, 2004). In active learning, children make associations that lead to deeper grasp of concepts. Thorndike’s theory of learning clearly defined learning as occurring through the incremental experiences that one has with the environment and preceded Bronfenbrenner’s theory of ecological systems. The enlightenment by Thorndike brought an increased awareness of social revolution in America in the 1890s (Kliebard, 2004). The debates and critique of individual scholars, philosophers, and theorists gave rise to interest groups as they struggled to be acknowledged and guided the development of the American curriculum (Kliebard, 2004; Slattery, 2013).

The National Education Association was established in 1892 to address the needs of American Education. The appointment of the Committee of Ten resulted in a new plan for education and initiated the first established curriculum (Preskill, 1989). Charles Eliot, the president of Harvard University and the chair of the Committee of Ten, defined what we know today as the eight years of elementary and the four years of secondary education. Furthermore, the commission created the first curriculum for high school, which established the four areas of discipline (Preskill, 1989). The onset of curriculum
development would lead to the national concentration of education up to the twenty-first century.

The American writer, John Franklin Bobbitt (1918), contributed the central idea of the curriculum as a vehicle to prepare children for life. He deemed that there was colossal waste in the educational system. However, he argued if the curriculum were carefully adapted to each individual child, the child would gain knowledge that was relevant to them and his or her future role in life (Kliebard, 2004). Bobbitt saw curriculum as an avenue wherein a series of experiences led to the development of attitudes, habits, appreciation, and range of knowledge for the future. Although these ideals were met with resistance and tension, they led to the “establishment of textile school in Lowell in 1897, in New Bedford 1899, and in Fall River in 1904” to provide vocational training to meet the needs of a growing industrial society (Kliebard, 2004, p.85).

Ralph W. Tyler, a student of Bobbitt, had similar views during the progressive era in education. Tyler (1949) wrote the “Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction”, in which he proposed four basic questions:

1. What educational purpose should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (Tyler, 1949)
Tyler (1931) forged the trend toward a large behavioral goal in the American educational system. He argued, “The first step in improving validity is to define clearly the types of behaviors which we are trying to get” (Kliebard, 2004, p. 327). There was uncertainty among schools as to whether to adopt these new ideas. Hence, only a few children benefited. Prestigious private schools were open to this approach and still follow that basic ideology.

As school leaders sought to streamline and standardized the curriculum in the early twentieth century, it became apparent that curriculum needed to be differentiated to meet the child’s needs and abilities. Democratic schools were instituted to address the challenge of differentiation. “Differentiation of the curriculum into individual tracks and hundreds of electives generated equal opportunity for students of varying ability. In addition, it provided a rich diverse curriculum for the multitude of ethnic and racial groups that were forming in America because of the large influx of immigrant” (Tyack, 2001, p. 7).

By the 1930s, curriculum building had evolved as a scientific and professional goal for reformers. In addition, it advanced as a field of educational study. The dialogue among the different theorists continued throughout the twentieth century and led to political influence in education through lobbyists. These lobbyists on curriculum promoted their choice of theory and knowledge among educators to gain control of the educational system and to promote and influence social change in the United States’s schools. The establishment of the various interest groups would later direct and drive today’s continual arbitrations among stakeholders in efforts to find solutions to the turbulent public education system in America (Bernard & Mondale, 2001).
Curriculum development in twenty-first century America. American society went through a complete transformation during the industrial age. Radical changes in lifestyles of every American evolved during the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. For this reason, John Dewey (1899) advised that education must undergo a corresponding modification to address the needs of our sophisticated social life (Edson, 1978). Despite all the attempts to modify curriculum, we have fallen short. Today, anti-bullying programs and campaigns in schools have failed to stop the tragedies of gun violence and suicide (Slattery, 2013). What are the obstacles that hinder success in schools?

To find some solutions, we must look deeper into curriculum that has modeled and shaped our educational system through the years. According to Pinar (1949), curriculum comes from the Latin word “cursus” which mean “an inward journey, a process, and race course”. It does not reflect the essence of the curriculum but defines actual occurrences in the classroom, and how knowledge is imparted to each individual (Slattery, 2013). Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) added, “A curriculum is an attempt to convey the underlying principles and features of an educational scheme in such condition that it is accessible to critical inquiry and capable of binding translation into practice” (Curriculum in Context section, para. 1) This process can be seen as a process for the following to occur: Emphasizing the individual one’s capacity to reconceptualize his or her own autobiography, recognize connections with people, recover and reconstitute the past, imagine and design possibilities for the future; this progress to greater personal and communal awareness allows one to find their personal talent (Rudduck, 1988).
Reconceptualization is the way to follow “curriculum as an interdisciplinary study of education by experiences (Slattery, 2013, p.306). Recently, the field of curriculum development faced new harsh critiques of reconceptualization in education. Dewey, Bobbitt, Eliot, Tyler, and others constructed the reconceptualization basic tenets, and notwithstanding the challenges, struggles, and obstacles they faced, their influence shaped and modeled curriculum for many years. The political reality of various policies and practices in curriculum development has prevailed in schools today (Slattery, 2013; Pinar et al., 1949). In spite of great transformations and contributions, the issues of social change were neglected after the move from the one room schoolhouse and never returned. The current prevailing theories of curriculum continue to reject the notion of social responsibility of schools in America (Bernard & Mondale, 2001).

Anthony Whitson (2008) challenged our educational system to be open, free and flexible, and to develop a curriculum model where “students learn to navigate through more than on discourse in an attempt to communicate and make decisions in life” (p. 15). He argued that students must consider confrontational ideas outside their prior knowledge and experience. Unfortunately, this theory has faced competition among leaders in education. School leaders have feared to allow children to partake in dialogues that deepen their understandings of society. Thus education continues to be marked by the failure to address issues of race, gender, religion and ethnicity, which is the cause of much of the violence in schools (Slattery, 2013).

Today, it remains true that these embedded social issues are ostensibly tackled by our educational policies. Although some interest groups have chosen to ignore these problems, we must be vigilant in how political policy shapes and forms curriculum for
the future (Slattery, 2013). “The evidence suggests that the application of these kinds of principles to educational practices can result in greater enhanced student learning” (Snyder, Bolin, Zumwalt, 1992, p. 430).

**The New York State Dignity for All Students Act.** The most recent policy related to social change and responsibility was enacted June 2012. The New York State Dignity for All Student Act (DASA), was designed to address the social concerns of bullying in our educational system. This policy put forward procedures and practices hoping to create a healthy and safe school environment where discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated (The State Education Department of New York, 2012).

The term harassment was defined as

The creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student’s educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical wellbeing; Or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; Such conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse includes but is not limited to conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse based on a person’s actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex (Education Law §11[7]).

Within this act, there are listings of the requirements set for school districts, which includes the need for social emotional development and character education. In addition, on the state level, the DASA called for the educational agency to ensure that
these needs are met by curriculum development (The State Education Department of New York, 2012). It was requested that the course of instruction in civility, citizenship, and character be constituted part of the curriculum in schools. The DASA relied on provisions and requirements to promote a school environment free of discrimination of harassment (The State Education Department of New York, 2012). This act described a connection between behavior and environment, stating that a peaceful environment will lead to reduced bullying incidents in schools. It reinforced the need for affective curriculum while identifying the key elements needed to meet the social and emotional needs of children.

**Social and emotional development of children.** As the world has continued to evolve, it presents a unique challenge for educators as bullying has continued to be a significant problem in schools. According to Cross (2005), as researchers began to investigate the potential impact on social and emotional development, there has been great concern that children may have social and emotional concerns that are being ignored in the larger scheme of attending to their cognitive achievements (VanTassel-Baska, Cross, & Olenchak, 2009).

All children have social and emotional needs; however, due to the pressures of meeting academic standards and achieving academic success, these needs are not represented as a priority in the school system. The culture children live has a great influence on their life experiences, which shapes and models their self-concept (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007). Children develop self-concept through their understanding of who they are and through occurrences with others through relationships (Robinson et al., 2007). These practices play a role in the social and emotional
development of all children. The cultivator of such an environment can make a
significant impact in the lives of all children (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009). According
to Goleman (1995), the relationship of the school environment and the child’s perception
of their acceptance can define their self-concept. Research and clinical practice suggested
that schools must understand that the social and emotional environment plays a greater
role in the prevention of bullying.

Children experience social and emotional development in different ways. The
impact of their experiences and interactions with their environment constructs knowledge
that helps them understand and function in the world around them (Cross, T. L., 2005).
Their need for social and emotional development varies tremendously. In addition,
children come from varied ethnic groups, an assortment of socioeconomic backgrounds,
and from every nation. These variables make it difficult to find a standard pattern of
talent (Neihart et al., 2002). In spite of the diversity, there exist common factors that call
for special attention as children work towards life goals and achievements (Neihart et al.,
2002).

Research suggested that there has been an absence of sufficient emphasis on the
whole child both at school and at home (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009). Thus, educators’
interventions can have considerable impact on the lives of our children. Understanding
the needs of social and emotional development is essential in nurturing our children.

Needs of our children. Since the No Child Left Behind Act, (NCLB), many
social and emotional programs and services have made little or no advancement (Duffett,
Farkas, & Loveless, 2008). The lack of change brings forth a need for improvement and
new initiatives (Duffett et al., 2008). Social and emotional development has been shown
to be a critical component of the curriculum, which can also be a powerful motivator in the cognitive performance of our children (Cross, 2005). Paradoxically, the adequacy of affective curricula to support the social and emotional development of the whole child has received little attention among educational reformers (Van-Tassel-Baska, 2009). The present emphasis on cognitive abilities often has caused educators to neglect the social and emotional well-being of the whole child (Tomlinson, 2002). This has resulted in neglect of children’s basic needs for self-efficacy.

Every child seeks and has a need for self-efficacy. This basic need is found among all children. It is important that children be seen as developing children first. They desire safety, security, belonging, achievement, and affirmation. One may ask then, why do we need social and emotional development? According to Tomlinson (2002), children present their basic affective needs in many different ways.

What is self-efficacy? Tomlinson (2002) defined self-efficacy as the process wherein a person overcomes and surmounts the obstacles in life that seem impossible to the individual with success. As children search for self-efficacy it becomes apparent that their basic needs are imperative for their personal talent. Unfortunately, many children have failed to experience this challenge (Tomlinson, 2002). For example, some children are rewarded in schools with “A”s but achieve this grade with little or no resistance, making them perceive that rewards are easy. Thus, the oxymoron of real life experiences leads to fear of failure because the child has not experienced failure and is unaware of failure itself. Children often avoid, resent, and most importantly fail to develop proper coping skills to fight inevitable turns of events in life (Tomlinson, 2002).
Conversely, other children have been shown to have a low self-esteem or a lower perception of their abilities because they can be excessively critical of their own performance. This dilemma can manifest itself as underachievement and avoidance of failure (Johnson, K., 2001). When children fail to experience hardship or avoid it, research has shown that children are more likely to be vulnerable and to be at risk for developing internal disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and other interpersonal problems (Neihart et al. 2002). Therefore, the need to address self-efficacy becomes a basic need among children.

Dabrowski’s theory of Disintegration described the quest for self-efficacy as a process where individuals grow internally through life’s experiences. He explained that children develop through the different levels gaining confidence and security with an easy challenge to reach self-mastery (Dabrowski, 1967). Self-knowledge allows the child to develop social and emotional attributes and be true to oneself, and to develop personal talents.

Abraham Maslow’s (1970) theory of hierarchy of needs also has been shown to play a significant role in the explanation of self-efficacy; however Maslow’s theory failed to address the emotional needs of children, which are important in this study. In addition, Maslow’s concept of self-actualization occurs when both the higher and lower aspects of the individual are actualized. Dabrowski goes beyond Maslow’s theory and stated that there is development that occurs when the lower aspect is inhibited by the individual while the higher aspects reach actualization (Dabrowski, 1967). This process occurs when children confront internal and external environmental challenges and grow through the paradigm shift in their lives. Thus, social and emotional development leads to the
achievement of personal talent and efficacy (Dabrowski, 1967). Importantly, the role of social and emotional development has been shown to be a key deterrent in effectively combating bullying in the twenty-first century (Greenberg, et al., 2003; O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999).

Bullying. Bullying among children is a long-standing and well-known phenomenon that received little or no attention until the violent incident that took place at the Columbine High School in 1999. Since then the media has continued to raise our awareness of bullying’s serious implications for children (Olweus, 2003). For a long time, bullying seemed harmless. Adults often taught children the old rhyme “Stick and stones my break my bones, but words can never hurt me”. Ironically, sticks and stone may hurt and inflict pain for a short time, while words can have a lifetime impact on the child (Garbarino & deLara, 2003).

Without a clear understanding of the parameters of bullying, it is difficult to assess its problems and solutions. Despite the extensive research conducted on bullying, many have disagreed on the definition of school bullying. Nevertheless, there is one common thread that has evolved among researchers; bullying involves repeated exposure to negative actions (Olweus, 2003). The dissertation study drew on Cross’s (2001) definition of a bully as “a person who uses any approach at his or her disposal including, but not limited to intimidation (physical, emotional, verbal) positional authority, relational authority, or societal authority to create limiting effects on another’s behavior, thoughts or feelings” (p. 36).

The ecological system theory can be an extremely useful tool to assist in comprehending why bullying arises in schools (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, &
Hymel, 2010). The theory showed how children’s behaviors are directly linked to the nested contextual systems found in schools, adults, peers and society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Connections can be made between social contexts and interactions on the child’s behavioral development from the ecological system theory (Swearer et al., 2010).

Bullying is a practice that unfolds within a social ecological context in schools. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system identified the influence of peers, teachers, administrators, the playground and classroom environments. When negative factors in these influences are combined, they enable bullying to emerge (Swearer et al., 2010).

The understanding of school climate has brought clarity to the issue of bullying. Bullying commonly occurs when there is less supervision and less structure in children’s activities (O’Connell et al., 1999). Bullying “occurs under the radar, out of sight, or is normalized by adults” (Peterson & Ray, 2006). Hence, adults play a vital role in controlling and reducing bullying. Within the school environment, bullying influences peer behaviors and interactions among them. Studies showed that 85% of bullying occurrences involve other children providing support to the bully as a bystander or actively joining in aggressive actions (O’Connell et al., 1999). When children are provided with a forum for bullying to occur, the bullying is prolonged and happens more frequently. Peer influence also is shown to play an active role in the bully’s attitude and behavior (Swearer et al., 2010).

Research showed that children and their friends are important elements in the bullying dyad. Children often do not report that they have been a victim of bullying, and instead tell their friends (Peterson & Ray, 2006). Very few incidents are reported to teachers and administrators; however, more than half inform their peers (Peterson & Ray,
2006). Mutual friends can be instruments to defend against teasing and aggressive behavior. These relationships have helped reduce and prevent victimization among peers, and research has suggested that children need good friendships and support to combat bullying (Boulton, Trueman, Chau, Whitehand, & Amtya, 1999).

On the other hand, peers can play an important role as silent bystanders or active participants. O’Connell, Craig and Pepler’s (1999) study found that 30% of peers actively engaged in bullying occurrences by exerting their own aggression, thus reinforcing the bully’s behaviors. The intervention by peers exacerbated and contributed to the ongoing maintenance of the system of bullying. Efforts to dismantle dysfunctional occurrences must be made by implementing affective curricula at a young age to develop social and emotional skills (Cross T. L., 2005; Peterson & Ray, 2006).

Many factors have placed children at risk for being bullied. Olweus (2010) suggested that children who are victimized often lack the development of social and emotional skills. Children need occasions to build social relationships with their peers and to develop social skills to understand their role in responding to bullying personally and school wide (Peterson & Ray, 2006). The challenge is to create a safe, warm, and peaceful community where children feel safe so that they can achieve success in school (Swearer et al., 2010).

**Components of an affective curriculum.** The National Association for Gifted Children (2009) defined affective curriculum as a “program that focuses on personal/social awareness and adjustments, and includes the study of values, attitudes, and self”. According to Affective Teacher Education (2007), “Affective education is
manifested through formal and informal actions and interactions evident in all content, processes, and contexts essential for teaching the whole child” (par. 3).

The events that occur in the classroom with children and their peers, and children with their teachers allow direct and indirect instruction to be implemented as a program of study in an affective curriculum. There are two main elements of affective curricula: (a) the direct instruction of social skills through “communication, trust, leadership, decision-making, goal setting, social influence skills and especially conflict resolution skills,” and (b) the indirect instruction through the establishment of a learning environment that fosters community and social interdependence, and the encouragement of positive relationships among individuals (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 6). These are two instruments that are used to promote affective development among all children (Moon, S. M., 2009).

Direct instruction is design to teach children a variety of social skills. Under this structure, children are taught interpersonal and small group skills essential for interacting with others (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). A child’s success in social relationships lays the foundation for academic success, peer acceptance, and appropriate behavior; therefore, the development of these affective skills results in fewer bullying incidents (Mucherah, Lapsley, Miels, & Horton, 2004). Interpersonal effectiveness and self-actualization are additional attributes that lead to social and emotional competence. The ability to interact with others while knowing and understanding the consequences or the outcome has been referred to as interpersonal effectiveness. The ability to achieve fulfillment and find joy in one’s abilities and talents is the drive of self-actualization (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).
Indirect instruction involves creating a classroom environment that fosters positive affective development throughout the curriculum. Social and emotional development for children works best if woven into the curriculum of instruction with specific goals achieved in the area of affect (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). This kind of environment has been shown to promote a community among learners, and encompass many stakeholders, most commonly the faculty, staff, students, parents and members of the neighborhood. The first step in creating a community of cooperative individuals is to share a common goal and to share a common culture. In a community, members share a common goal of the need to belong and seek to form relationships among themselves (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Understanding a child’s need to belong has influenced the implementation of group work in classrooms. For this reason, interdependence becomes apparent in the community environment (Ferguson, 2006).

With the presence of positive interdependence, children in the community yearn to interact, exchanging ideas and knowledge to advance in their personal talents (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Responsive and empowering classroom environments are the elements that nurture a child’s social and emotional development (Powell, 2001).

There have been significant empirical findings that supported the link between children’s perception of the community, social and emotional development and the reduction of delinquent behaviors such as bullying (Mucherah et al., 2004). Unfortunately, despite the evidence and support by literature, educators have overlooked the affective domain (Peterson & Ray, 2006). Research has shown that assessment and evaluation of affective objectives are crucial for understanding of children’s affective characteristics including emotional nature, attitudes, interest, values, preference, self-
esteem, and anxiety (Anderson & Anderson, 1982; Costa, 1977). Using the lens of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, affective curricula can be an instrument to aid children to comprehend the complex role of human relationships. In addition, Bronfenbrenner challenged us to look at how culture influences a child’s choice and interactions with others and not focus directly on a child’s behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The Montessori educational program. Maria Montessori developed a Peace Education unique in its design and seamlessly woven into all aspects of the academic curriculum. Montessori pedagogy and comprehension of social and emotional development are reflected in the design of her Peace Education. Her emphasis was the independence of the child at work within a prepared environment. Montessori (1949) believed that it is only through independence that one can achieve true interdependence in a community. The mixed-age Montessori classroom sets up a microcosm for interdependence among children where exchange and cooperative learning with peers is believed to eliminate the competitive element in the classroom (Montessori, 1972). The notion of Locke’s theory of the environment shaped Montessori’s philosophy that children must construct knowledge through concrete interactions with the learning community and the external environment, which is the classroom and the world outside (Montessori, 1972).

It was in 1897 that Montessori began developing her philosophy and methods. She opened her first classroom, the Casa Dei Bambini in the slums of Italy and implemented her educational approach (Lillard, 2005). Montessori, an Italian physician and educator, believed that children learn from one another. She was the catalyst in the
movement of mixed age classrooms (Lillard, 2005). Her curriculum was supported by a multi-age structure where there is a three-year cycle of three age groups within a single classroom. This environment provided a continuum for emotional stability where initiation, apprenticeship, and leadership was embedded within the community (Powell, 2001). The emphasis was on independence, interdependence, freedom within limits, and respect for the child’s natural psychological development, which she called cosmic education. Cosmic Education is the foundation of the Montessori Elementary Curriculum.

The word “cosmic” is defined as the as “the universe, esp. as a well-ordered whole” from Greek Kosmos means “order and harmony” (Merriam-Webster, 2011, cosmos, def. 3) Thus, cosmic education possesses the concept that the whole universe is working in partnership while still creating of all that is. Hence, by its reality every element of nature executes a task in preserving equilibrium in the universe. Cosmic Education, as the framework of the Montessori lower elementary educational model, enables all children—whether they have special needs or are considered gifted—to gain a meaningful perspective and awareness about the world in which they live and their role in the universe.

In Montessori schools, Cosmic Education was founded on the understanding that all children will explore and discover that everything in the universe is interrelated and interdependent; everything has a role to play in harmonizing the world we live in. Montessori’s (1972) emphasis was the independence of the child at work within a prepared environment. She believed that it is only through independence that one can achieve true interdependence in a community. In a Montessori classroom, children use
specialized materials and are given the opportunity to select their work from a range of materials rather than receiving direct instructions from a teacher (Lillard, 2005).

As Montessori developed her approach, she saw the need to incorporate peace into the Cosmic Education (Montessori, 1949). Montessori believed that education plays a vital role in the progression of world peace. Montessori (1972) explained that children struggle to define themselves through their social and emotional development as well as their cognitive growth. They wrestle with independence and interdependence as the journey through the stages of development (Montessori, 1972). Cosmic Education embodied the concepts of peace, conservation, values, hope and gratitude, and openness.

Montessori felt that given the opportunity children could develop and give rise to a peaceful outlook on global issues and encourage tolerance among all civilizations (Montessori, 1949). In the process of achieving self-efficacy, children need to have greater control of their live. “Such an atmosphere of freedom and personal responsibility in the classroom must be built on a firm foundation of social responsibility” (Powell, 2001, p. 33)

Montessori’s work on peace was recognized internationally. She was nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize, and she gave a number of lectures on global peace. Montessori stated, “preventing conflict is the work of politics; establishing peace is the work of education” (Montessori, 1949, p. viii). Montessori became known for her work with children and developed the Cosmic Education curriculum widely used today in Montessori schools through the United States in both private, public, and charter schools.

**Peace in the Montessori classroom.** The peaceful classroom environment found in Montessori classrooms has had tremendous impact on social change in the twenty-first
Montessori’s philosophy of peace education relied on the teachings of understanding and being compassionate for all living things. “While this element of education can often be overlooked or crowded out in traditional public classrooms, the Montessori schools clearly demonstrate it and often do it in opposition of the common trends” (Duckworth, 2006). The experience that children obtain in a Montessori classroom has future implications for nonviolence and has the power to prevent violent acts and promote positive interactions between individuals (Duckworth, 2006).

The Montessori Lower elementary educational model had deep foundations rooted in Cosmic Education. The concept of wholeness and completeness is at the heart of Montessori’s philosophy. Wolf (1996) described it as follows:

If everything in the universe came about from the same source—the original fireball that many believe preceded the creation of the stars—then we as human beings are related to all other human beings, as well as to the animals, plants, oceans, and heavenly bodies. Therefore, if we deliberately destroy nature or harm other living beings we might be ultimately destroying ourselves. This realization is an underlying principle for promoting peace, equality and care of the earth (p. 93).

Wolf underlined the virtues found in Montessori theory of peace education by demonstrating the holistic model of learning that occurs in the classroom. It is through these intrinsic applications that Montessori believed that education and peace could instill social changes and create a more peaceful world. There are common characteristics found in a Montessori classroom that foster peace.
Peace education is presented to the child as a beautiful woven tapestry where integration of knowledge and problem solving occurs daily. This process occurs through the integration of disciplines where children link their discoveries and questions about the universe. There are connections and associations that emerge through their work. According to the Duffys (2002), “Whenever ties can be made between elements of the curriculum that reinforce each other, the learning is made more effective and interesting. Teachers should always strive to integrate the curriculum elements as much as possible, weaving them into a single fabric” (p.146).

Children in the Montessori lower elementary classroom make connections that are rich and bring meaning to their lives. This microcosm of the world allows children to gain greater understanding of their role in the universe. Montessori explained that the cosmic task of education begins with great stories of our universe. In the Montessori lower elementary classroom, substantial time is spent offering children insight into their world through various exercises such as the timeline of writing (Duffy & Duffy, 2002). The history of writing gives children the opportunity to see the progression of writing from the cave drawings by early humans to the present day computer and iPad. This course of study provides a realization that writing is a tool given to us by our ancestors. Later, the connection becomes evident as the gift of writing, which is an instrument, used each day assist in the exploration of all things.

The gathering together on the rug in the Montessori classroom symbolizes another important characteristic of peace education. The children form a circle allowing each individual member to have a space that is not the beginning nor the end, but part of a whole. “The circle itself is a wonderful symbol of community” (Wolf, 1996). The origin
of the symbolic gesture of the circle is taken from the history of gathering since the early ages when people would gather for meetings and other celebrations. It is with the ideology of unity that Montessori classrooms alike follow the tradition (Wolf, 1996). Within the community circle, children discover how to share and respect the unique characteristics of each member. Children learn to take turns to speak and listen to different points of view. This allows children to understand their role in the larger context, which is the world in which they live in. “It is interesting to see how little by little, these children become aware of forming a community which behaves as such…Once they have reached this level, the children no longer act thoughtlessly, but put the group first and try to succeed for its benefit” (Montessori, 1967, p. 232).

In the Montessori classroom, teachers strive to foster confidence and independence in each child. Although the direct link with peace education is not apparent, Freire (1993) clarified that these two characteristics are essential in allowing children to think critically thus forming moral judgments with confidence and working independently for social change. Building a foundation will result in the same function as peace education. Freire emphasized, “people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves” (Freire, 1993, p. 83).

Independence is embedded in the Montessori classroom. The environment serves as the ultimate teacher, giving children the opening through manipulation of objects to move from the concrete to the abstract. These materials provide exploration, discovery, and knowledge as the child works with these instruments. Material is carefully displayed in the prepared environment so the child may make his or her selection. The function of
this environment fosters interaction, sharing, and responsibility among children (Duckworth, 2006). Furthermore, the three-year age span in the classroom allows for leadership and apprenticeship among the children. Through these relationships, the seeds of peace education are planted. Learning to address conflict becomes natural and a way of functioning in the classroom and in the world. The environment in the Montessori classroom sets the stage for peace education, and the teacher serves as a model through preparation, attitude, demeanor, and example (Montessori, 1949).

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory illustrated the development of children by examining the environmental factors and external influences that support in the affirmative outcome of children, which aligns directly Montessori’s philosophy. Montessori (1967) stated, “the immense influence that education can exert through children has the environment for its instrument, for the child absorbs his environment, takes everything from it, and incarnates it in himself (p. 66). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), principal relationships must be those that last a lifetime such as teachers, parents, and peers; without these relationship children lack the social and emotional skills. Sustaining the primary relationship is the means to better social and emotional development of children. Montessori worked to establish a philosophy where educators support the primary relationships described in Bronfenbrenner’s mesosystem. Montessori anticipated that external factors such as war and violence had a directly influence on a child’s development. Bronfenbrenner’s ecosystem affects the child’s development by interacting and changing its microsystem.

Especially in a world where schools have been targets of violence and in which students have murdered one another, the teachers and parents felt that students
needed to be exposed to ideas on peace and nonviolence, and to have an outlet for discussing world events in light of the principles of nonviolence, human rights and justice (Duckworth, 2006, p. 42).

Hence, it is the role of the teacher and parents to foster relationships to create a safe, peaceful, and nurturing environment where children thrive (Montessori, 1972).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 provided overview of the literature that supports the dissertation research. The chapter identified key theorists, defined the origins of curriculum development, reviewed the DASA, discussed the social and emotional needs of children, investigated affective curricula, discussed bullying in the 21st century, outlined the components of an affective program of study, and examined the Montessori Peace Education as a pedagogy of peace.

The theoretical framework in Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive outline for the literature review. The foundation offered an in-depth look at the theories behind social and emotional development of children, bullying, affective curriculum, and the Montessori Peace Education. Significant empirical findings offered strong evidence to support the link between social and emotional development in children and the need for affective curricula in schools to address the critical issue of bullying in the twenty-first century.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

General Perspective

A mixed method evaluative research study was conducted nationally to examine Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy for peace from 1960 through 2012. The purpose was to evaluate the impact of the Montessori lower elementary education on the social and emotional development of children. The research study specifically examined how Montessori lower elementary education in first through third grades addresses bullying in the twenty-first century, while focusing on the role of curriculum in shaping an effective policy to address the social and emotional development of children. The study investigated how an embedded social and emotional curriculum such as peace education can prevent bullying and foster a holistic environment where children feel safe and nurtured. The fundamental role of the methodology was to discover the key peace initiatives present in the Montessori lower elementary education and compare it to the policy implications of the “Dignity for All Act 2012,” the most recent New York State law attempting to address bullying through laws and regulations. The objective of this mixed method evaluation was to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the Montessori curriculum serve to address social concerns of bullying in the 21st century?
   a. What does the Montessori peace education initiative look like as an integral component of the Montessori lower elementary educational model?
b. How does the Montessori “peace education initiative” address bullying in schools?

2. What role can the Montessori lower elementary educational model play in shaping effective policy to address the critical issue of bullying in schools?
   a. What are the similarities and differences between the Montessori model of education and the New York State “Dignity for All Students Act 2012,” legislation as frameworks for addressing bullying in the school?
   b. What can we learn about shaping effective bully prevention policies from examining the role of Montessori curriculum as it addresses social concerns?

The study investigated the instructional effectiveness of the Montessori lower elementary education program as pedagogy for peace and identified the influences of Montessori Education on the social and emotional development of children. Through this methodology, the study found evidence of performance trends addressing bullying in the twenty-first century and discovered the peace initiatives present in the Montessori lower elementary education.

In this mixed methods approach, data was gathered using a concurrent triangular design. According to Cottrell and McKenzie (2011), a concurrent triangular design requires the analysis of multiple methods of data concurrently to achieve consistency in the study. As a mixed methods approach, the research study used both quantitative and qualitative perspectives in a concurrent triangular design. In the study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to show whether there were convergences, differences, and/or some combination (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Three different measures
supported and reduced apparent weaknesses present in one method with the strength in the other, balancing the instruments to arrive at well-validated and substantiated data (Creswell, 2009).

Substantial, rich descriptive data was gathered from the quantitative survey questionnaire, and qualitative data was collected from a focus group panel and in-depth interviews. The use of multiple instruments gave evidence on the intricate and salient issues of the evaluation (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2011). This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the mixed methodology used in the study, outlines a description of the research context, research participants, and instruments used in the data collection, and explains the procedures for data collection and analysis.

**Research Context**

Montessori Education came to the United States in 1911 (Mathews, 2007). However, conflict between Montessori and the American educational establishment resulted in the rejection of Montessori’s philosophy on education and the publication of William Heard Kilpatrick’s critical booklet, *The Montessori System Examined* (Lillard, 2005). It was not until 1967 that Montessori Education was revitalized with the establishment of the first Montessori school, Whitby, in Greenwich, CT. Nancy Rambush, the head of the Whitby School, pioneered the spread of Montessori’s philosophy on education throughout the United States.

Today, Montessori schools of all types and characteristics can be found throughout the landscape of the United States. More than 5,000 Montessori schools nationwide serve a diverse population of students (North American Montessori Teachers Association, 2011). Montessori schools are located in rural, suburban, and urban regions
in a wide range of communities ranging from working class towns to affluent
neighborhoods, from inner cities to remote villages.

**Research Participants**

Participants for the study were selected from the more than 5,000 Montessori
schools in the United States. The sample population was reduced using a purposive
sampling. Only accredited Montessori lower elementary schools serving grades 1 through
3 were examined. The universe for the study was determined by using a purposive
sampling to create a homogenous sub-group (Patten, 2009) of the 150 accredited public,
private, and charter Montessori elementary schools grades 1 through 3.

According to the two recognized leading bodies of Montessori in the United
States, the American Montessori Society (AMS) and Association Montessori
International (AMI), there are 150 Montessori lower elementary schools accredited
among the estimated 5,000 Montessori schools in the United States. Table 3.1 displays
the school by regions of the United States map.

AMS and AMI are the two accrediting agencies that maintain Montessori
educational principles and disseminate Montessori education throughout the United
States. The objective was to gather data to evaluate the Montessori lower elementary
education, grades 1 through 3 with greater uniformity by collecting data only from
accredited institutions. The rationale for this assumption was that these two accrediting
bodies ensure that the schools have met all required Montessori standards for curricula,
which includes Montessori’s philosophy of education and peace. Therefore, Montessori
accredited schools have certified teachers who have been trained to deliver the same
Montessori lower elementary education program.
Table 3.1

Accredited Montessori Schools in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>American Montessori Society</th>
<th>Association Montessori International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-West</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 150 accredited Montessori schools 81 were identified as AMI schools and 69 were AMS schools. The quantitative portion of the dissertation study consisted of all 150 accredited Montessori lower elementary programs grades 1 through 3 in the United States.

A focus group of four teaching faculty members at a Montessori training center, and four individual interviews of heads of school were conducted for the qualitative segment of the study. A convenience sampling was gathered for focus group and interview participants from the volunteer respondents list collected from an email inquiry. Among the volunteer respondents, four heads of school were randomly selected for interviews and four were selected for the focus group. Due to cost and time, the focus group portion of the study was limited to one Montessori training center in the United States. The criteria for the focus group selection included (a) participants with a
minimum of five years teaching, (b) participants with experience teaching on the elementary level, (c) participants who were available in July for the focus group session.

**Instruments Used in Data Collection**

The mixed methods research consisted of three instruments: surveys, interviews and a focus group panel, which provided quantitative and qualitative data. Data collection began in July 2012 when the summer teacher-training program was in session. Surveys were distributed in November 2012 when teachers and administrators were in a daily routine and had time to participate. Interviews were held in December 2012.

**Survey questionnaire.** The survey questionnaire designed and created in accordance with recommendations by Fink (2003). The review of literature in Chapter 2 guided the preliminary construction of the survey. The survey collected quantitative data on the practices and ideology used in the Montessori lower elementary educational model as pedagogy of peace. The survey questionnaire (Appendix A) contained 28 items and was administered using Qualtrics Survey Software on the World Wide Web. The 28 items included 20 questions using on a four-point Likert-scale for quantitative responses. Questions 1-7 were related to the implementation of the Montessori Peace Education Program. Questions 8-13 were on social and emotional development of children, and questions 13-18 were related to the severity of bullying in the respondent’s school. Questions 19-28 were descriptive, setting the demographic parameters for the respondent. The questions allowed the participants to respond precisely to identify the key peace initiatives in Montessori lower elementary education program grades 1 through 3 in the United States.
The survey was reviewed by a panel of experts consisting of Montessori educators to determine the instrument’s content validity and reliability for the study. Content validity is defined as a measurable tool to access the accuracy of an instrument and involves a review by an expert panel in the field (Creswell, 2009). A two-step process was followed to obtain validity and reliability for the survey. Lynn (1986) describes content validation as a two-stage process to ensure that the instrument is connecting abstract concepts with observable and measurable indicators. Stage one of Lynn’s content validation process, the development stage, was performed by the researcher, who conducted a comprehensive review of the literature. The literature review resulted in identifying the content and research questions used to guide the establishment of relevant domains for the survey (Lynn, 1986). In the next stage, judgment-qualification, a panel of five experts worked independently to review the instrument and rate each item of relevance according to the content domain (Lynn, 1986). The panel of experts consisted of five Montessori educators: two who have published extensively in peace education, two who have done extensive work with bullying as Montessori educators, and one university professor who has done a broad range of work as a Montessori researcher in grades K-12.

The 28-item questionnaire was rated by the expert panel to ascertain the content face validity, which is how adequately the survey would measure the logical connections to concepts and research questions and whether “it measure[s] what it purports to measure” (Patten, 2009, p. 63). The experts were given a set of specific instructions to determine the content relevance of each item in the survey and the whole instrument (Appendix B). Using the content validity index (CVI) in Appendix C, the expert panel
rated the content based on a four-point ordinal scale (Litwin, 2003). The range of options extended from one, categorized as irrelevant, to four, categorized as an extremely relevant item. The CVI is determined by the proportion of items receiving a rating of three or four by the experts (Lynn, 1986). In addition, the experts were given an area for comments and suggestions for each question and the entire survey. The process of judgment-qualification provided content, clarity, and comprehensiveness for the overall instrument. The feedback and comments were used to revise the survey document.

The final survey was administered to 150 Montessori lower elementary teachers nationwide. A membership list was used from the AMS and AMI database to compile the participant list on Microsoft Access which was merged with a Microsoft Word document, producing a personal introduction letter to each head of school. The lower elementary teachers were chosen because of their expertise in the delivery of Montessori education and their daily presence in the Montessori lower elementary classroom within their schools. Names of the participants were coded as unidentifiable numbers by the Qualtrics software in order to ensure anonymity. Through this survey questionnaire, both numerical ratings for statistical analysis and qualitative data were gathered through open responses (Fink, 2003).

A letter was sent by email introducing the researcher and the study to the 150 accredited Montessori elementary schools grades 1 through 3 in the United States (Appendix D). The letter informed the heads of schools that a survey link was enclosed in the letter and asked them to select a lower elementary teacher to fill out the survey on the school’s behalf. In addition, an attached consent form was sent with the email restating the purpose of the study and assuring that the results would remain anonymous.
The lower elementary teachers were given two weeks to complete the survey. After one week, the schools that did not respond received a reminder from the “Qualtrics” web platform. By the third week of October 2012, a telephone call was placed to encourage heads of schools to respond to the survey questionnaire.

**Focus group.** A focus group panel was convened to capture perceptions and experiences on the peace initiatives that are transmitted to Montessori teachers as they attend training for seven weeks during the summer. The focus group interview was selected to align different perspectives from the teacher training aspect for the mixed method study. As an effective way of gathering information, the focus group discussion was guided by six open-ended questions, which generated discussion on suppositions and thoughts, and evaluated issues (Patten, 2009).

A stratified random sampling of the volunteer respondents from the email inquiry was chosen for the focus group panel. An introductory letter was sent by email introducing the researcher and the study to the seven faculty members of a Montessori training center headquartered in the northeast region of the United States. The structured focus group was conducted as an evaluative assessment tool searching for peace initiatives within the Montessori lower elementary education program and assessing the degree of affective influence on the social and emotional development of children.

The structured focus group was conducted during July 2012. The tone was set at the session by starting with an informal discussion about the researcher’s work to ease the participants. Focus group participants were asked to complete a focus group consent form prior to the start of the session (Appendix F). A brief introduction was provided to inform all participants about the study and reassure them of the anonymity of the session.
digital audio recorder was used with the consent of the participants to gather information during the focus group. A field journal was used solely as a means for gathering reflective comments. The researcher facilitated the focus group session. Six questions guided the discussion, which lasted about 45-60 minutes (Appendix G). A small cocktail was served following the session in appreciation for their participation. At the end of the data collection phase, a letter was sent using the United States Postal Service to all participants thanking them for their participation in the focus group.

**Interviews.** The qualitative research methodology also consisted of in-depth one-on-one interviews with four heads of school in person or via “Skype” video call. The interview involved asking five open-ended questions tailored to gather the participant’s perception of Montessori’s philosophy of education and peace and the implementation of these ideas in the Montessori lower elementary program. The interviews probed more deeply to obtain information about the peace initiatives embedded in the Montessori lower elementary education and its affective influences on social and emotional development of children as well as its impact on bullying in the twenty-first century.

The interview phase of the data collection began during the first week of December 2012. The interview process supplemented and verified the information received through the survey (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2011). Four heads of school were randomly selected to participate in the interview process. An introductory letter was sent by email introducing the researcher and the study to the four accredited Montessori elementary schools grades 1 through 3 in the United States (Appendix H). An interview protocol sheet was created with five open-ended questions. Both sessions were recorded digitally by an online audio instrument. The heads of school were asked to complete a
consent form prior to the date of the interview via email (Appendix I). The interviews were held for a period of 45 minutes and were recorded with a digital audio recording device. In addition, reflective notes were gathered at the end of each interview in the field journal. Later the recordings were transcribed and coded for key concepts and qualitatively assessed. At the end of each interview, the participant was thanked and reminded that all information gathered at the interview would remain confidential.

**Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis**

The procedure for data collection was patterned after Roberts (2004) and Creswell (2009). The researcher followed the concurrent approach, where the survey questionnaire, focus group transcript, and interviews were analyzed with equal attention to all three components. Data collection began in July 2012 and was completed by December; analysis began December 2012.

Once all data were collected, descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were used concurrently for analysis. The data analysis began with the creation of a table displaying the research questions, the instruments, and key themes that emerged. The table provided an organizational framework to see clear patterns and trends among the three instruments.

The survey questionnaires provided quantitative data on attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and circumstances that surround the Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy of peace. The qualitative data from the focus group allowed the researcher to obtain observations of specific behaviors and characteristics (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). In addition, the qualitative data collected from the interviews provided perspectives, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences about the Montessori lower elementary education as
pedagogy of peace. The interviews also provided clarification, allowed probing, and permitted the exploration and discovery of multiple realities that the survey did not reveal (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). The wealth of information gathered in these instruments gave strength to the findings.

Descriptive statistics from the survey questionnaire were used to summarize the data collected on the Montessori lower elementary education. A triangulation table shows the themes that emerged (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2011). By means of the table the researcher was able to draw inferences based on the results described in the descriptive statistical frequency table. There are three variables that were evaluated: (a) the implementation of an embedded peace education in Montessori lower elementary programs, (b) the influence of the Montessori lower elementary education program on the social and emotional development children, and (c) the identification of the peace initiatives of the Montessori lower elementary education and its potential impact on bullying in the twenty-first century.

Furthermore, the inferential statistics led to a set of significance tests using the Chi-Square Test (Patten, 2009). This test assisted determining the degree of reliability in the data collected (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2011). The statistical analysis revealed a blueprint of patterns and trends in the evaluation of the Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy of peace and its degree of influence on the social and emotional development of children and its potential to impact bullying in the twenty-first century.

Hence, this mixed method study used a concurrent triangular design where quantitative and qualitative data were collected by means of a survey, focus group, and interviews to evaluate the Montessori lower elementary education as an affective
curriculum influencing the social and emotional development of children. This led to the selection of evident themes that emerged throughout the study.

A research notebook was kept to record and organize the data collection process. The content of the notebook includes a log of activities: individuals involved in data collection, dates when data were collected, time, date and place when data were collected, and what specific data were collected. To assist the organization of data collected, a lockable file cabinet, file folder, and binders to file and organize hard copies of the data were purchased. Copies of all emails, forms, and documents collected, transcriptions of each interview were kept in a binder, which was stored in the locked filing cabinet. Due to the large data corpus, the recommendation of Creswell (2009) was followed by storing all types of information collected on an external hard drive, while making the necessary changes to the database daily.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction and Research Questions

The dissertation study examined the Montessori Lower elementary education as pedagogy of peace: an alternative framework to address bullying in schools. This chapter presents the results of the mixed methods research study. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected by means of a focus group discussion, a survey questionnaire, and interviews. Participation was restricted to American Montessori Society (AMS) and Association Montessori International (AMI) accredited schools throughout the United States. The data were collected in three phases: the focus group was held in August 2012, and the survey was distributed in October 2012 and completed November 2012. The interviews were conducted in December 2012.

The focus group consisted of four members of the teaching faculty at a Montessori teacher-training center. The meeting was held during the summer session. Seven instructors were invited to participate in the focus group, and four of the seven responded. A facilitator guided the discussion with six open-ended questions (Appendix H). The session was recorded on a digital audio recorder and lasted approximately 55 minutes. In addition, field notes were taken to capture participants’ non-verbal gestures, facial expressions, and body language.

Thirty-two of 150 (21.3%) Montessori accredited AMS/AMI schools completed the survey (Appendix C), which was administered through the online Qualtrics software. During a four-week period, two reminders were sent to increase the response rate. Four
telephone interviews were conducted with current and previous heads of schools. Using the protocol outlined in Appendix F, interviews were completed and the digital recordings were transcribed. Two of the four recordings were poor in quality and could not be transcribed. Thus, only two interviews were used analyzed.

The three data collection instruments (teacher survey; faculty focus group; and the head of school interviews) were reviewed and analyzed applying Creswell’s (2009) triangulation design. Table 4.1 displays the research questions, recurring themes, concepts, patterns, and trends. The process of triangulation provided a unifying framework for related themes that emerged from the different sources (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2011; Creswell, 2009).

The chapter is divided into two sections organized by the responses to the research questions. The first section of the chapter presents the results that address the first research question: How does the Montessori curriculum address bullying in the 21st century? The sub-questions were (a) what does the Montessori peace education initiative look like as an integral component of the Montessori Lower Elementary education model, and (b) how does the Montessori “peace education initiative” address bullying in schools?

Key themes that surfaced in the responses to the focus groups, surveys, and interviews guide each section with narratives and statistical tables supporting the facts offered. Direct quotes from interviews and focus groups provide narratives and validation for key themes that emerged from the survey data. The second section responds to the second research question: What role can the Montessori Lower Elementary education model play in shaping effective policy to address the critical issue of bullying in schools?
The subquestions were (a) what are the similarities and differences between the Montessori model of education and the New York State “Dignity for All Students Act”, legislation as frameworks for addressing bullying in schools, and (b) what can we learn about shaping effective bully prevention policies from examining the role of Montessori curriculum as it addresses social concerns?

The second section is organized by the responses to the latter research question. Key themes guide each section with narratives and statistical tables to support the findings.

In the triangulated analysis of data collected, Montessori teachers, heads of schools, and educators identified several key indicators that are found in the Montessori lower elementary educational model. The data revealed that Montessori education is unique in its methods of implementing peace education. Teachers, heads of schools, and educators indicated in the focus groups, surveys, and interviews that Montessori provides a holistic environment that nurtures peace in various ways. Furthermore, the data demonstrate that the Montessori lower elementary educational model offers an alternative approach to addressing and preventing bullying in the 21st century.

**Data Analysis and Findings**

Peace initiatives are woven into the fabric of the Montessori curriculum, and serve to prevent and minimize bullying. The discussions among the faculty focus group, statistical data with comments from the teacher survey, and the dialogue in the interviews revealed the value of the Montessori philosophy in addressing the social and emotional needs of children in lower elementary classrooms while preventing and minimizing bullying in the twenty-first century.
Table 4.1

*Triangulation Results: Research Questions and Emerging Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How does the Montessori curriculum address bullying?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) What does the Montessori peace education initiative look like as an integral component of the Montessori Lower Elementary education model?</td>
<td>Teacher’s Role</td>
<td>Cosmic Education</td>
<td>Cosmic education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) How does the Montessori “peace education initiative” address bullying?</td>
<td>Mutual Respect</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Mutual Respect Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What role can the Montessori Lower Elementary education model play in shaping effective policy to address the critical issue of bullying in schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. What are the similarities and differences between the Montessori model of education and the New York DASA legislation as frameworks for addressing bullying in the school?</td>
<td>Cosmic Education Unique Not fragmented Preventative</td>
<td>Wholeness Not fragmented Cosmic Education</td>
<td>Not fragmented Preventative Cosmic education Not a stand alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. What can we learn about shaping effective bullying prevention policies from examining the role of Montessori curriculum as it addresses social concerns?</td>
<td>It is a way of life Holistic approach Social and emotional development Holistic approach</td>
<td>Social and emotional development Holistic approach</td>
<td>Holistic approach It’s a way of life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Research question one.** How does the Montessori curriculum serve to address bullying in the twenty-first century? The data collected were gathered from three sources: teacher survey, faculty focus group, and head of school interviews. From the survey demographics, data were gathered to establish a framework and provide descriptive information about the participants. Table 4.2 displays the teacher survey responses, showing the years the schools have been in existence. The data showed that 46% of the respondents’ schools had been established for more than 33 years.

Table 4.2

*What Year was Your School Established?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2000-2012</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1999-1990</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1989-1980</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1979- Prior</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 shows 42% of the respondents were in the southeast region and twenty-six percent were in the northeast; totaling 68% from the east coast of the United States.
Table 4.3

Location of the School by Regions of the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Southeast (Florida, Georgia, Arkansas, North Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Virginia, New York, West Virginia)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mid-West (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 shows that majority of the respondents were from private schools. The data indicated that 96% of the respondents were from schools that are not run by the government, and therefore charge fees for tuition.
Table 4.4

Type of Montessori School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private (a school that is not run by the government and therefore charges fees for tuition)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Public (a state funded elementary or secondary school providing free education)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Public-Charter (public schools of choice that are tax-supported and open to all students)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 displays the schools location. The data showed that 75% of the respondents’ schools were located in suburban areas.

Table 4.5

Geographic Location of the Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.6 displays teacher experience ranging from 16 or more years of experience for veteran teachers and 0 to 5 years of experience for novice teachers. The data showed that 50% of the respondents had between 6 to 15 years of experience.

Table 4.6

*Years of Experience as a Montessori Teacher*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+ years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the teachers who responded, 29% had 16 or more years of experience. Table 4.7 shows a cross tabulation of how the years of teaching experience compared to how often children demonstrate peaceful interactions with others.

Table 4.7 shows that among teachers with varied experience as Montessori educators, 100% of the teachers said that children interact peacefully daily in the classroom. Furthermore, the data revealed that the number of years of teaching experience did not play an active role in the implementation of peace education in the Montessori classroom. Regardless of teaching experience teachers reported that they are successful in addressing the social needs of children in fostering peaceful interactions on a daily basis.
Table 4.7

Cross Tabulation of Years of Experience as a Montessori Teacher and Children Demonstrating Peaceful Interactions with Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Often do Your Children Demonstrate Peaceful Interactions with Others?</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Less than Once a Month</th>
<th>Once a Month</th>
<th>2-3 Times a Month</th>
<th>Once a Week</th>
<th>2-3 Times a Week</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many years of experience do you have as a Montessori teacher?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+ years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teacher’s role.* The “teacher’s role” emerged as an important theme from the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the focus group session, survey, and interviews. The survey data showed that the role of the teacher is significant in creating a peaceful curriculum. The first question on the survey was: “What aspects of the Montessori lower elementary classroom support peace education?” This question elicited deep introspection from the teachers, as one teacher responded, “First, looking at myself as a guide to the children…my level of peace is paramount.” Another teacher
strengthened this statement by saying, “Adults model core values in their behaviors towards others … in their care of the environment and … methods use to foster the child’s development of self-discipline.”

Question number seven on the survey asked the teachers to rate the teacher’s role on a Likert-scale from extremely important to not at all important. The role of the teacher was considered extremely important by 62% of the respondents, 31% believed that it was very important, and 20% believed that it was somewhat important.

Table 4.8

*Teacher’s Role in the Implementation of the Montessori Peace Educational Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Neither Important nor Unimportant</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher's Role</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 shows most of the teachers felt that their role in the implementation of the Montessori peace educational model was extremely important. In the focus group, this theme of the role of the teacher also emerged. Speaker A explained, “Unless the teacher embodies the values … you cannot just mouth it, you have to embody it, you have to be genuinely generous in spirit, and you have to be all of those things… so the responsibility to be a technician and that scientist is critical …that’s what makes it saintly because you have to watch yourself so closely.”

Speaker D also expressed that there are certain characteristics expected among Montessori teachers. “I think it varies with the individual teacher… I think a lot of them
(teachers) take it to heart the idea that the teacher is a technician, a scientist and a saint,” stated speaker D. These attributes of a teacher are seen as fundamental components of peace education in a Montessori lower elementary classroom. Speaker B expressed the role of the teacher as being a model for children by their attitudes and behaviors in the classroom by setting, “A lovely balance between humility and really being a person who’s interested to have as a part of a community… there’s a certain command, a vibrancy to the personality but at the same time not needing to be the center of attention.”

The mannerisms that teachers use to model peace are attractive to the children and have an impact on the community in the classroom. These influences permeate the teachers’ interactions with the children and teachers model this, which results in mutual respect among all members of the community. Speaker C stated, “As a gentle firmness … you see that they [teachers] mean what they say … it’s the mannerism with which they [teachers] say it, … there is a genuine respect for the child.”

**Teacher training.** The second theme, “teacher training” drew on the theme of teacher’s role in the implementation of peace in the Montessori lower elementary educational model. The data gathered from the faculty focus group identified teacher training as a key theme. The following data show how the teacher acquired skills to successfully implement the Montessori lower elementary educational model as pedagogy of peace even during their first years of teaching. The focus group spoke about the spiritual transformation that occurs during the teacher’s seven week training. The wisdom gained throughout the experience transcends the training and becomes the foundation upon which the teacher constructs her pedagogy in the classroom. Speaker A described the gradual transformation process that occurs over the seven weeks of training, “In the
beginning they [teachers] are not, they are reluctant to do that [engage in the community]. They [teachers] think that’s sort of intrusive, but … at some point there is a shift, and they [teachers] really do see themselves… as a family… than the family starts interacting responsibly with one another.”

Speaker C affirmed, “You can see that through the short time the students have been here. It’s almost like a change of heart or a metanoia; they’ve been making a change, an inner change in how they are looking at their career of teaching.” Speaker B stated, “It’s always interesting to see, in the beginning of the summer particularly, how people respond in new situations … It shifts to being … not so self-conscious about how they are supposed to be behaving but being more authentic. Speaker A confirmed, “I think when they get back to their schools, there is a whole bunch of trigger mechanisms that happen… the philosophy works because…we teach so much curriculum impressionistically, we give them experiences and their feelings that are related to these experiences, which include the kind of shy reticence that they felt at the beginning of the games and then the feeling of warmth, when they realize they have overcome that… they are one with their group….”

In the session with the faculty focus group, the “teacher-training” theme emerged, and Speaker C discussed how this transformation continues to evolve throughout the internship year. “When you look at them [teachers] in the first year… then when they come back for the second part of their training… they are different people. You can see the growth. They are more at home in their own skin, they are not so fearful of a new lesson. They say, I wish I had done [it] that way… and that shows growth.” The gradual
transformation allows the teacher to self-reflect on their teaching, which in turn results in growth.

The quality and standardization of Montessori’s philosophy are transmitted to each teacher during training, therefore even novice teachers can be transformed as teachers. Speaker C stated, “They can make a difference within the life …of a trained teacher, who’s forgotten the root…the root of Montessori. They [trained teacher] have gotten into the systematic academics part of it…I’ve seen young teachers make a difference within that classroom.”

Not only have the teachers been transformed but they also can influence their colleagues who have fallen into bad habits and have temporally forgotten their original transformative experience. The new teacher can awaken the forgotten message of Montessori philosophy and rejuvenate the teachers who have fallen into the systematic academic routine. The statistical data and qualitative data showed that years of experience are not determining factors in the success of the teachers implementing peace in the classroom; rather the training is the key component. The data showed that teacher training has been significant to the study of peace education in Montessori lower elementary classrooms.

**Research question one (a).** What does the Montessori peace education initiative look like as an integral component of the Montessori Lower Elementary education model? The data collected indicated that the development of community found in Montessori has a direct influence on peace education and is an integral component of the Montessori lower elementary educational model.
One of the teachers who responded to the survey stated, “I believe the building of community most widely supports peace education”. Community is a broad term that was well described in the faculty focus group, teacher survey, and head of school interviews. Figure 4.1 shows the subthemes associated with “community.”

![Community word cloud of subthemes](image)

Figure 4.1. Community word cloud of subthemes.

The theme “community” in the data allows one to see the embedded Montessori peace education initiatives through several sub-themes: class meeting, autonomy, multi-age grouping, listening, working together, environment, and appreciation of differences. The font size of each theme symbolizes the frequency at which the themes were mentioned in all three instruments. The largest word, “community” was mentioned about thirty-five times and within the discussion of community, appreciation of differences was stated approximately ten times.

Among the above-mentioned subthemes, “class meeting” was mentioned frequently with rich descriptions of its role in peace education. According to the teachers, the class meeting is a key element that fosters a sense of community. Several respondents explained how the class meeting builds leadership, compassion, patience, and
responsibility. One of the respondents stated, “Class meetings led by the children, give them the experience of being leaders in the classroom community… as each child leads, they learn to listen carefully to all points of view and help the group come to a consensus.” Another respondent explained, “Our weekly class meeting give structure to the children… a voice in their own environment…the classroom is truly their place…they maintain the order, cleanliness, and help guide and shape policies and procedures together with adults. Children voice concerns and together they come up with solutions in a democratic way.”

Thus, through these discourses that take place in the class meetings, Montessori children are given a voice in their environment and the autonomy to build a sense of community. This forum can be self-empowering for children as described by the faculty group speaker D: “We hold community meetings… We understand that our schools aren’t exempt from kids that can dominate other kids…be mean to them… be cruel to them… I have to show a community to be strong, to rise to best self and counteract…those kinds of influences.”

This concept was reinforced by a teacher survey response; “Classroom meetings with student involvement; role playing issues…helping children solve problem and giving students ‘words or phrases’ to use when being confronted by a peer.” Another teacher indicated, “Community meetings are where the children have a say in how rules and expectations develop in our community.” During the summer training, teachers have lived experiences of what a community is, giving them the tools and skills to enter the classroom. Speaker A described the community as a family. “The family starts interacting responsibly with one another.” Speaker C added, “There is like that hominess that setting
Speaker B noted the sense of community as infused in the training experiences that foster awareness among the adult, which then gets passed down to the children in the classroom. “We [faculty] don’t want to shake our finger and lecture them [teachers] and say, ‘By the way, did you know you had a community building experience?’ …When they realize they are a community, we can say, ‘Think about how it happened. What promoted that?’ … We infused the whole training experience with that awareness … they [teachers] have support and reminders …throughout the internship year.”

Within the community, a sub-theme “multi-age grouping” provides room for diversity. The “multi-age grouping” arrangement has an impact on how individual children interact with each other. Whereas traditional schools are structured with typically one age group per class, Montessori schools by contrast, use three-year age grouping to encourage learning from peers. In the survey data, the teachers felt the multi-age environment was an important contributor to peace education. One teacher indicated, “In the elementary, the children are exposed to numerous positive challenges socially and academically. The environment is prepared for this and lends itself to problem solving and self-discovery.” Another teacher stated, “The mixed age classroom in Montessori laid the foundation of younger children being ‘guided’ and mentored by older. The older grow into their role of modeling great behavior. The older children remember distinctly their first year and how important it felt to be guided by an older child.” Another teacher shared her views with this perspective on “multi-age grouping”; “Multi-age classrooms are to support the growth and development of each child and their independence…Taking
turns and sharing during group discussion, work period, and lessons—providing children with real life experiences such as going out and learning about how the world around them works and helping them to realize how they fit in society.” This teacher explained that in a “multi-age grouping,” children are given the opportunity to be independent while at times they are dependent of each other. These experiences model real life experiences that allow children to learn how to function and succeed in the world.

The word cloud in Figure 4.1, revealed the subtheme, “environment,” which emerged through the discussion of community. “Environment” refers to the physical and emotional components of the classroom: materials, the teacher, children, and the atmosphere. In the survey, teachers stated that the classroom environment was extremely important. Table 4.9 indicates that 20 out of 32 teachers rated classroom environment as extremely important to the implementation of the Montessori peace education model.

Table 4.9

*Role of Classroom Environment in the Implementation of the Montessori Peace Educational Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Neither Important nor Unimportant</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two concepts surfaced from the conversations about environment across all three data collection instruments (survey, focus group, and interview): (a) the environment is uniquely created by the teacher, (b) the environment is real, resembles the real world, and addresses the social needs of children. The interviews indicated that the environment nurtures peace education by its simple existence in the community. Interviewee 2 stated, “Your classroom is a community so you need to learn how to live respectfully as members of that community. The classroom is a place to practice for the larger community.”

The faculty from the focus group explained that development of a community happens naturally with the right experiences that teachers gain from their training. The teacher is responsible to create this prepared environment in order for creating these peace initiatives. Speaker A acknowledged this idea by stating, “Kids are simply in an environment and they’re all learning, and they don’t distinguish between the learning that they got from the adult in the room or the materials that are on the rug. It’s all just learning. So the responsibility to be a technician and that scientist is critical.” Speaker B affirmed, “Having the ability to create this environment, where individuals can function as individuals and they are not a collection of people doing the same thing at the same time … that is an extraordinary thing … to do … to manage … without having to control it.” Speaker A continued, “I really think this is important. To manage without control is a really important thing.”

The faculty expressed that the unique setup in the environment leads to management without children consciously knowing it. This focus on the environment as a unique tool was also present in a teacher’s survey response, “The prepared environment
provides the deeper understanding of the living and nonliving world in which we live. Honor and respect is given to all things on this planet.” Another teacher stated, “The prepared environment invites peace and respect for each other.” There is a sense of sacredness in the environment and it guides children to understand how to function in the big world, the universe. This is exemplified by a quote from the faculty focus group. “I think the kind of community we have been talking about is pretty sacred…I think it could be fragile for all reasons we talked about. There have been times, one comes to mind … in Puerto Rico the classroom were …sacred but in the beginning of that school, they were havens, they were safe harbors in a world that was pretty chaotic outside, and those teachers really conscientiously formed a safe spot. And not only transformed the classroom, it transformed the entire village.”

Speaker 4 solidified this concept of safe haven by saying teachers create the world outside by what they do inside the classroom. “The class environment is the real world. A lot of times parents or people who aren’t so familiar with Montessori will say ‘What about when the kids go into the real world?’ And of course we know they do very well. But I always think that the real world is inside the classroom. That’s the best that the human being can be… It’s what we aspire in the real world, and we shouldn’t apologize because we are providing an environment…we are creating that kind of environment.”

Based on the data analysis, the community found in the Montessori lower elementary classroom was found to be a unique environment that the teacher creates; where children have multiple opportunities to learn from real life experiences to address various social concerns. The peace initiatives allow the classroom environment within the community to be a safe haven for children of diverse ages and all backgrounds. They are
respected, listened to, and given autonomy in a safe environment to bring change and acceptance.

**Research question one (b).** How does the Montessori “peace education” initiative address bullying in schools? To answer this question, responses from the survey questions 14, 15, 18, and 29, focus group question six and interview question seven were analyzed. These questions included four major categories, the frequency of bullying among children, the response to bullying, policies and practices on bullying and teacher support in dealing with bullying issues.

The teachers were asked to use a five-point Likert scale ranging from never to most of the time to answer question 14, which indicates the frequency of incidents of bullying in their schools. Table 4.10 shows that 67% of the teachers chose “rarely” indicating that bullying incidents were rare in their schools; 15% of the teachers chose “never” indicating that there were never occurrences of bullying. Of those teachers who indicated the presence of bullying in their schools, 11% reported bullying incidents occurred “sometimes” and 11% reported that bullying incidents occurred most of the time.

Survey question 29 required teachers to rate on a five-point Likert-scale the rules and regulations defined at their school. Among the teacher responses, 17 out of 26 reported that they agreed that the school clearly defines rules and regulations protecting children from becoming bullies, while 18 out of 26 stated that it protects victims of bullying, and 15 out of 26 said that it prevents conflict on the playground. Table 4.11 displays a matrix where teachers rated their agreement with the school’s rules and regulations as it pertains to bullying.
Table 4.10

*How Often Do You Document Incidences of Bullying in Your School?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#14</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11

*The Rules and Regulations at Your School Clearly Define The Following:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#29</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Responses, Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Prevent conflicts of the playground</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Protect children from becoming bullies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Protect victims of bullying</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings displayed in Table 4.11 were supported by both faculty focus group data and interviews. The faculty focus group comments provided additional perspective on the influence of the Montessori “peace initiatives” on addressing and preventing bullying. When the faculty focus group was asked, “What role has Montessori philosophy
played in influencing bullying in Montessori schools,” Speaker B responded, “If observation is a core component of what teachers do and how teachers gather information about what is going on… it’s not an absolute shield against the possibility of bullying… as a teacher, I need to practice observation because I don’t know what I’m going to see… that extra awareness of what is going on… we are not just assessing children academically but we are really looking at the social-emotional health and well being… as we are observing… observations are ways that can help us be aware of the possibility of children treating each other unfairly or bullying or dominating somebody else… observation is a core philosophical component.” Speaker A approached this question in a slightly different manner showing how the previously mentioned subtheme of “autonomy” can address bullying. The autonomous child takes charge of his community to ensure it remains peaceful. Speaker A stated, “In the communities that we have, it’s much less likely that a code of silence is going to be universal… kids do step up, and they do speak out when they see somebody being unkindly treated or unfairly treated… not everybody does but there certainly are some people, that in my experience you’ve got to talk to about ‘How can you stand by?’… not always from my observations that I’ve known something is going on, it’s usually because somebody has come forward and says, ‘This isn’t right.’ I think kids really come to the expectation, they come with a high expectation of the way their community treats each other, and they want to defend its cause, they want it to be the way it’s supposed to be.”

Another faculty member speaker D added, “There are some kids… who don’t have that empathy that we’ve been talking about, for whatever reasons, and perhaps can be counseled and brought to that point. The appeal that we make to children to think
about how you’d like to be treated isn’t as effective for those kinds of kids, and so we really need to empower the other children to speak up to call the bullying when they see it, to be friends with the person who’s being bullied, and not to tolerate it and not let it go on, the way sometimes we might let other things go where the whole community would eventually come around and say, ‘we haven’t been very good to each other’ and we come to an awareness…sometimes it means talking to the parents of that child, taking a stand. That’s one of your responsibilities, as a teacher… to protect the class from that kind of behavior and help the bullying child somehow turn a corner, too…its more direct action called for in a situation like that, as a teacher.”

In this discussion, the faculty reinforced the role of the autonomous child and the role of the teacher. In the embedded curriculum, teacher and children both take an active role in supporting peace education in their community. Even when bullying occurs rarely, the incidents are dealt with in various ways. Table 4.12 shows what happens in the classroom when children report that they have been insulted, teased, and harassed by another student.

The teacher addresses the issue 89% of the time by having a discussion with the children involved; 54% of the time a community meeting is held; 44% of the time direct instruction or a lesson on peace is given. Also, many teachers commented, “We encourage conflict resolution, but make sure the victim feels supported by teachers and principal if they feel they cannot handle the situation. Children are first encouraged to address the issue with the offending child, but the teacher observes to see if help from an adult is needed.”
Table 4.12

What Happens in the Lower Elementary Program When A Child Reports That He Has Been Insulted, Teased, and Harassed by Another Student?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#15</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher addresses the issue by having a discussion with the children involved</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lesson on peace is given</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Meeting is held</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cross tabulation Table 4.13 shows that staff meetings are held two to three times a month by four teachers and once a month by five teachers, while twelve teachers reported that 25% of the time staff meetings are dedicated to discussing student conflict resolution.

The values in the cross tabulation Table 4.12 indicated a trend suggesting that in the Montessori system there is very little time during staff meetings dedicated to conflict resolution. This result may be due to the reports of rare incidents of bullying in Table 4.9. However, in Table 4.13 the p-value was found to be greater than 0.05 indicating it was not statistically significant.
Table 4.13

Cross Tabulation of the Frequencies of Staff Meetings and How Often Meetings Focus on Conflict Resolution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you have staff meetings?</th>
<th>Bullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once a Month</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Month</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 Times a Month</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Week</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 Times a Week</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14

Chi-Square Values on Frequencies of Staff Meetings and How Often Meetings Focus on Conflict Resolution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you have staff meetings?</td>
<td>5.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research question two. What role can the Montessori Lower Elementary education play in shaping effective policy to address bullying in schools? In the data collected, the faculty focus group spoke about ways in which Montessori differs in its approach in dealing with the issue of bullying. Speaker A stated, “It’s different because I think it’s all of a piece… there are lots of wonderful things that are out there that you can see on the web, and various ways of doing things. I can imagine [in] lots of schools…a teacher will take time out of their routine and say, ‘Now we’re going to do anti-bias every Wednesday afternoon for weeks.’ I think, all of the things we’ve been talking about are part of the fabric, the weave reality of a Montessori classroom… because it’s holistic in that way, and it’s the definition of the community and the culture. It’s … deeper. It’s not something that’s added on it’s…” Speaker C interrupted, “…Part of everyday life.” Speaker A continued, “It’s a web.” Speaker B reinforced the concept that peace is embedded in the lower elementary educational model in her explanation: “There are schools that use reading programs and they implement a reading program. It’s an add-on, in a sense, in the component part, and it’s self-contained…we’ve used the words fabric and weave…you can’t separate out peace education from how people are in … classroom.”

The teachers who responded to the survey and as well as the heads of school interviewees shared their experiences and effective practices of the Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy for peace. One teacher stated, “Teaching with the Montessori method encourages peace education because the whole system is based on respecting child, others, and the environment. When people are respected, there is peace.”
Peace is an embedded component in the everyday curriculum in the Montessori lower elementary educational model.

The following three accounts strengthened the notion of peace being embedded in the everyday curriculum. Teacher 1 stated, “All aspects of the Montessori lower elementary classroom support peace education. It is a model of education founded upon respect for the individual. Every day the children work on peer mentoring, being compassionate, and solving problems using positive language and “I” messages.” Teacher 2 affirmed, “The open environment allows children to practice their social skills all of the time. Students creating their own work means that they must collaborate, communicate, agree about the nature and scope of the work, and resolve any issues that arise…giving lessons to small groups and constant encouragement for the children to be associated with one another…grace and courtesy…class meeting…an attitude that supporting the social, emotional, spiritual development of students is just as important as their academic development.” Another teacher shared similar thoughts on the practice that occurs each day in the classroom. “Every day there is conflict resolution, collaboration, class meeting…community and learning…deeper leadership.”

**Research question two (a).** What are the similarities and differences between the Montessori model of education and the New York State “Dignity for All Students Act 2012”, legislation as a framework for addressing bullying in schools? This question was answered by analyzing all three instruments: teacher survey, faculty focus group, and head of school interviews. “Cosmic education” emerged as the central theme in the triangulated data.
One teacher stated, “We promote ‘cosmic education’ in which peace education is inclusive in every aspect of the curriculum. The very concept of learning about the world from the large concepts then working our way down to the more detailed gives children a bigger picture of humanity. The lower elementary focus on ‘cosmic education’ leads children to understand the interdependence of all living things. They read about, study and experience symbolic relationships and intricate webs of organisms that often include human beings…this general understanding, in combination with our direct teaching of peace, makes for a beautiful environment. As a former traditional public school teacher, one of the aspects of Montessori education…I value most is the flexibility of time. If we need to stop and have a conversation about a specific issue, we are able to. If my students need to practice social skills, I am able to take the time to directly teach that skill.”

Table 4.15 contains the survey responses from the teachers, which showed overwhelmingly that “cosmic education” is the most influential factor in the Montessori elementary education model as pedagogy for peace.

Of the 29 teachers who responded, 25 indicated that Montessori “cosmic education” was “extremely important” and four indicated it was “very important”. The next element that emerged was “classroom environment.” Of the 29 respondents, 18 rated classroom environment as “extremely important” and 7 rated it “very important.” The “teacher’s role ranked third with 18 out of 29 respondents deeming it “extremely important,” and Montessori Materials ranked fourth in being categorized as “extremely important”
Table 4.15

*Elements in Developing a Peaceful Classroom*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Neither Important nor Unimportant</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Montessori</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmic Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Classroom</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Teacher's Role</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Montessori</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montessori Materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, in the faculty focus group it was found that “cosmic education” plays a significant role in infusing peace in the classroom. Speaker A explained, “One example that always intrigues me is that we always talk about the contributions that parts make to a greater whole, and we always talk about that with people, but we also talk about that with words in a sentence. That’s the language we use in sounds and words. It’s the language we use for the organs of an organism, within an ecosystem, again and again and again we talk about contributions of parts toward a whole. We even say this is the job of a multiplication sign. So I think the idea of acknowledging, appreciating contributions is the water that the kids swim in, in a Montessori classroom. By itself that’s not insignificant, may be minor, but it’s one of the characteristics of the culture and when we
pull all of those things together, it’s not surprising that kids come out of the Montessori experience with the sorts of ways you were describing: they are lifelong learners and they want to make a difference; they want to know, ‘Where can I contribute?’ ‘What’s my work?’”

Speaker C added, “We brought them cosmic education—the fundamental needs lessons … study of another continent…How do they make their way given their land, and given their food—the whole circle of life. They don’t always do that in a traditional school. They don’t always have that integration of how people are living, and making their way, and being important.” Speaker A strengthened his agreement with this statement: “They don’t always simultaneously talk about how people are the same and different. They usually talk about the differences or you talk about similarities. We usually ask kids to think about both of them at the same time. We’re all the same because we have the same needs, but actually what’s really cool is we can celebrate the ways that we meet our needs, which are all different. And that’s true for organisms and how they breathe; it’s true of cultures and how do they house themselves. It’s true for so many different things.”

Speaker C reinforced the uniqueness of Montessori education by stating, “I think that’s the key to an authentic Montessori classroom for teachers and children. It’s a life skill. It’s not just a curriculum of math, language, culture etc. It’s life skills within each one of those and they are put together in such a way that the authenticity of the teacher spills out to the children. And they’ll want to do it just because it looks like so much fun.” Table 4.16 shows that the teachers believed the Montessori educational model provides children with skills needed to deepen their understanding of themselves.
Table 4.16

Does Montessori Lower Elementary Education Provide the Children with the Skills Needed to Deepen Their Understanding of Themselves?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data show the Montessori educational model as being unique in its approach to academic and social/emotional development using “cosmic education.” “Cosmic education” is not fragmented but has wholeness and it is not a standalone program. The Montessori philosophy is embedded in all that occurs in the classroom and in all interactions.

**Research question two (b).** What can we learn about shaping effective policy bully prevention policies from examining the role of Montessori curriculum as it addresses social concerns? The triangulated data showed the Montessori lower elementary educational model as a “holistic curriculum” that addresses the social/emotional development of children aged six to nine. The data revealed that the role of curriculum is significant to the success of Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy for peace. Table 4.17 lists eight items commonly used in the Montessori lower
elementary classroom. Teachers were asked which lessons/activities they incorporate in the curriculum to encourage a peaceful community.

“Conflict resolution” was chosen by 28 of the 32 respondents, making it the most popular choice at 97%. In addition, Speaker C talked about how the Montessori lower elementary is a holistic educational model where children learn skills through the process of real life experiences of their heritage in the classroom. Speaker C stated, “I think our stories … the history of writing, the history of math, how light came, bread—all those different stories go back to the contributions that the humans have made through the years. They may not understand every part of it, but I think it’s going to have an impact on them later on.” Speaker A added, “They certainly know they are benefitting from that heritage, because they got that story again and again. A lot of people have contributed to getting the bread that I’m now eating.”

Speaker D stated, “I think it’s an optimism, it’s a world view that thinks well of people and children, that we do things for the greater good. In part we are good, and that children don’t need to be manipulated by rewards and punishments because essentially they are bad and they’re going to try to wiggle out of doing the work. They won’t instinctively be considerate or compassionate or nice. That really you have to have those self-awareness, self-esteem programs. They have to have student of the month to feel good about themselves. We have kids who are so loving and competent, and enjoy serving each other and everybody is worth something and gets recognized for that, but they feel good about themselves. They don’t need to be told they’re good. They feel good and I think that results in just a very joyous, positive atmosphere in the classroom. And I think that’s why you see Montessori teachers teach into their 60s and 70s and they don’t
get burned out because you are not working against the system. You’re part of something really good and big, and every year is exciting and different and brings that vitality and excitement to the classroom and to your students.”

Table 4.17

Which of the Following Lessons/Activities Are Present, If Any, to Encourage a Peaceful Community in Your Lower Elementary Classroom?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Peace Circle Lesson</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Peace Table</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;I&quot; Messages</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>International Peace Day</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Peace Rose</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Exercises from the Honoring the Light of the Child Book</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Peer Mediation</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewee 1 affirmed, “The specific element of the curriculum speaks to those things like fundamental human needs… every human is looking for the same thing in life…we go about it in different ways, depending on time and place.”

Summary

In summary, the data analysis revealed several significant findings on how the Montessori lower elementary educational model serves to address the social and emotional development of children and functions as a deterrent to bullying in the twenty-
first century. The teacher survey, the faculty focus group, and the head of school interviews provided insight into the salient issue of bullying in schools. The study outlined the integral components of the Montessori peace education initiatives. Teacher’s role, community, teacher training, embedded curriculum, cosmic education, and holistic approach are key elements that shape the Montessori educational model in grades one through three.

The teacher survey findings provided the quantitative data for the study; however, the comments and open-ended questions added support to the statistical data. Although the demographics showed most teachers were from private schools in the suburban eastern region of the United States, rich and significant themes and concepts emerged addressing the research questions. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics showed trends and patterns even though the findings were not statistically significant.

The faculty focus group revealed “teacher training” as an important function in the Montessori educational model. This was an unexpected finding that will be discussed further in Chapter 5. The head of school interviews strengthened the study by substantiating the results with narratives. Chapter 5 analyzes the implications of the findings reported in Chapter 4 describing the Montessori lower elementary educational model as a pedagogy of peace and highlighting the similarities and differences of the New York State DASA. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for future research.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine the role of curriculum in shaping educational policy as an effective framework to address the social concerns of bullying in the twenty-first century. The research focused on Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy for peace and how its curriculum addresses bullying, a serious social problem across the United States. Chapter 5 presents the implications of the findings and limitations. The chapter concludes with the recommendations for future research and a summary.

The findings in the study indicate that Montessori lower elementary education is an effective model that prevents and minimizes the incidents of bullying in the twenty-first century. The data showed that among the schools that participated 63% documented that incidents of bullying occur “rarely,” and 15% said bullying “never” occurs. Furthermore, the findings in Chapter 4 showed that rules and regulations at teachers’ schools clearly define the following preventative measures: addressing conflict on the playground, protecting children from becoming bullies, and protecting victims of bullying.

The study provides valuable insight into how Montessori lower elementary education can be an effective model for the implementation of the New York State Dignity for All Students Act 2012 (DASA). Table 5.1 shows that Montessori lower
elementary education meets all the standards written in the DASA and provides additional initiatives to consider in the development of affective curriculum.

Table 5.1

_Similarities and Differences between The New York State Dignity for All Students Act and Montessori Lower Elementary Educational Model._

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dignity for All Student Act</th>
<th>Montessori Lower Elementary Educational Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom</strong></td>
<td>traditional classroom where relationships between and among adults and students and the extent that its members share purpose and belongings and make sense of new information and demands</td>
<td>freedom and discipline, structure and order, reality and nature, simplicity and beauty, the Montessori materials, normalized children, and the responsible life in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td>model and instructor</td>
<td>model and guide for the child technician, scientist and saint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>model and instructor</td>
<td>model and guide for the child technician, scientist and saint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>classroom, hallways, auditorium, cafeteria, locker rooms, playground, and campus, even the school bus</td>
<td>class meeting multi-age grouping autonomous learners real life experiences constant interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peer Interactions</strong></td>
<td>cooperative grouping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>fragmented/ add on</td>
<td>woven together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lessons/Activities</strong></td>
<td>character education</td>
<td>embedded affective curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict</strong></td>
<td>lessons taught by teachers</td>
<td>teacher or child can initiate the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resolution</strong></td>
<td>lessons taught by teachers</td>
<td>teacher or child can initiate the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social and Emotional Development</strong></td>
<td>too early to evaluate -hope to achieve in this new policy</td>
<td>present throughout the curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings also revealed that Montessori lower elementary education has a holistic approach towards social and emotional development that is well embedded in its academic curriculum.

The findings from the research study give evidence that Montessori lower elementary education can be a model to guide the shaping of effective anti-bullying policies while providing specific recommendations for the following components outlined in the DASA: establishment of school environment, the teachers’ role in the classroom, and the function of community. Additionally, Montessori cosmic education as a holistic approach and the transformation of teachers in training set the foundation upon which affective curriculum is built.

Implications of Findings

This section discusses the implications of the findings. The section is organized by the major themes revealed through data analysis: school environment, teacher role, community, teacher training, and cosmic education.

Establishment of school environment. As noted in Chapter 4, the survey participants identified the environment as one of the essential components of peace education in Montessori lower elementary classrooms. The findings exposed the fact that the Montessori environment is carefully created by the teacher and maintained by the community. Montessori (1967) refers to the classroom as a “prepared environment” that is rich with didactic materials, warm and beautiful in appearance, and resembling the real world in all its functions. This prepared environment gives children the opportunity to acquire experiences that aid in their daily social and emotional development.
The precise preparation of the environment in the Montessori classroom is not accidental. Montessori (1967) argues, “The immense influence that education can exert through children has the environment for its instrument, for the child absorbs his environment, takes everything from it and incarnates it in himself” (p. 66). She further states that children’s conduct and mannerisms are a direct outcome of their environmental experiences (Montessori, 1967).

The findings related to the environment are consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s Theory of Ecological Systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the theoretical framework of the dissertation study. It is through real life experiences found in the environment children construct their social and emotional development, which has a direct influence on shaping their behaviors and attitudes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Montessori was aware of the significance of environment in which children live and the Montessori model insists that the environment be carefully assembled by the teacher. Montessori describes the eight key elements that must be present in the environment for social and emotional development to occur: freedom and discipline, structure and order, reality and nature, simplicity and beauty, the Montessori materials, normalized children, and the responsible life in community (Montessori, 1967).

The recent establishment of the DASA also recognizes Bronfenbrenner’s Theory of Ecological Systems and identifies the school environment as an essential component of this policy. The DASA states, “The school environment encompasses every space students occupy: classroom, hallways, auditorium, cafeteria, locker rooms, playground, and campus, even the school bus. It refers to the relationships between and among adults
and students and the extent that its members share purpose and belongings and make sense of new information and demands” (Deal & Peterson, 1990)

The DASA presents school environment as a framework that improves school culture but does not give specific instructions on how to create such an environment. The Montessori approach, however, provides concrete elements that support the Theory of Ecological Systems and satisfy the standards for school environment outlined in the DASA. Bronfenbrenner (1979) clearly states that things that occur in the environment, have a direct effect on children, ultimately influencing their social and emotional development. To be effective in children’s social and emotional development, and behavior, one must consider all the mechanism of the environment and how it affects their lives. In the microsystem, which is the base level in Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System, the real life experiences that children attain occur through interactions with people, materials, activities, and most prominently in interpersonal relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The implications of this finding exemplify the need for New York State educators and policy makers to review and identify ways in which school environments are constructed. The finding points to the necessity for an analysis of DASA. Curriculum writers must define and determine the essential components of an affective framework to establish a school environment that brings social change. The Montessori Elementary education is one such framework.

The role of the teacher in the classroom. The data presents the role of the teacher in the classroom as fundamental to designing a peaceful environment. Various studies by Lillard (2005) and Gallavan and Leblanc (2009) on the impact of the role of
the teacher in the classroom are consistent with the findings in the present study, which show that modeling and guidance are key factors in creating a safe environment for children. The findings give evidence that regardless of the number of years the Montessori teachers have been teaching, they reported that they were successful in addressing the social needs of children through peaceful interactions.

In the literature review, an overview of the history of curriculum shows how education in the United States moved from an old schoolhouse model to the present day public school (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). In the old schoolhouse model, the teacher’s role was different than it is today. In the early days, the teacher fashioned her teaching to meet the needs of the whole child (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). The schoolhouse model imparted many of the morals of the time. Children of all ages came together to acquire the tools and basic skills necessary to ensure success in own lives.

The industrial revolution changed the role of the teachers. They became more mechanical in performing the duties of running an effective classroom. During the development of curriculum in the late 1800s in the United States, Thorndike (1913) saw the role of the teacher as being simple, direct, and dry. Little emotion was necessary to accomplish the goal of filling the empty vessel with knowledge. He believed that children could learn by following the same routine and launched the concept of active learning through the experience of the environment.

Montessori saw the role of the teacher differently from the way that role had been defined in the traditional public school. A Montessori teacher does not impart knowledge into an empty vessel but provides children with opportunities to link concepts and ideas and to understand the universe through interactions with adults and peers (Lillard, 2005).
In Montessori, the teacher’s role in the classroom is to guide, intervene when necessary, and model how to solve problems (Lillard, 2005).

Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development Theory affirms that the success in the classroom relies heavily on the teacher’s role in providing assistance and guidance (Vygotsky, 1976). Vygotsky (1986) indicates that the adult’s function is an important variable in human development. The data show that the mannerisms teachers use to model peace are attractive to the children and have an impact on the community in the classroom. These influences permeate the teachers’ interactions with the children and teachers model this which results in mutual respect among all members of the community. Speaker C from the focus group stated it clearly: “As a gentle firmness … you see that they [teachers] mean what they say … it’s the mannerism with which they [teachers] say it … there is a genuine respect for the child.” Gallavan & LeBlanc (2009) elaborate on this idea in their statement, “Each teacher not only teaches about affect as an essential aspect of the subject’s content and skills, every teacher models and reinforces affect as the accepted outlooks and behaviors exhibited in a multitude of interactions teachers and students experience each day” (p. 27). Gallavan and Leblanc (2009) assert that the teacher’s role is vital to the success of an affective educational curriculum in the public school system.

The findings in the dissertation study solidify the teachings of Montessori. Speaker A from the focus group explained, “Unless the teacher embodies the values … you cannot just mouth it, you have to embody it, you have to be genuinely generous in spirit, and you have to be all of those things… so the responsibility to be a technician and that scientist is critical … that’s what makes it saintly because you have to watch yourself
so closely.” A teacher in a Montessori classroom has the “spirits” and an outlook of a
scientist. The teacher develops the role of the scientist by eagerly observing and
searching for discoveries and ways to keep the mystery of nature alive for the children.
In this process, the teachers forget themselves and allow her passion, curiosity, and
interest to guide the children to make the connecting links between the materials and the
world (Eissler, 2009). Montessori instructors are not considered teachers but “guides.”
This distinction is made deliberately in order to eradicate the traditional view that
teachers in public schools are ones who impart knowledge (Eissler, 2009).

The objectives in the DASA are similar in approach. They identify the teacher as
the heart of the affective development. Bronfenbrenner gives the rationale for the
importance of this finding. He explains that the interaction between the child and the
adult promotes social development that is engrained as an experience which impacts
future experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Teachers influence this reaction by engaging
in a variety of social behaviors:

- They form relationships with children.
- They communicate values to children.
- They instruct children.
- They model social behaviors and attitudes.
- They design activities that highlight and give children practice in relevant
  knowledge and skills.
- They plan the physical environment.
- They formulate routines.
- They communicate rules to children.
They enact positive or corrective consequences to help children comply with societal expectations (Kostelnik, Gregory, Sodeman, & Whiren, 2009). The findings related to the role of the teacher have implications on how effective an affective curriculum will be in a given classroom. In the data, Speaker C stated, “They can make a difference within the life …of a trained teacher, who’s forgotten the root…the root of Montessori. They [trained teacher] have gotten into the systematic academics part of it…I’ve seen young teachers make a difference within that classroom.”

Not only have the teachers been transformed, but they also can influence colleagues who have fallen into bad habits and have temporally forgotten their original transformative experience. The new teacher can awaken the forgotten message of Montessori philosophy and rejuvenate the teachers who have fallen into the systematic academic routine. The statistical data and qualitative data show that years of experience are not determining factors in the success of the teachers implementing peace in the classroom; rather, the training is the key component. The data collected showed that teacher training and disposition is significant to the study of peace education in Montessori lower elementary classrooms.

School officials need to examine teacher training, the disposition of current teachers, and their willingness to impart new ways of methodologies of teaching. “Teacher dispositions are reflective of the whole person as evident in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of learning and expression…teachers’ dispositions play powerful roles in all formal and informal learning environments evident in the curriculum, instruction, and assessment” (Gallavan, Peace, & Ryel Thomason, 2009, p. 353).
The function of a community. The present study reinforces the role of community in schools. The study defines community as a place where all members live together and share various interactions in a warm, peaceful, and respectful way. The development of a community in Montessori education develops naturally through life experiences and the structure of the environment. In a Montessori community, children live real experiences without distinguishing the academic learning from their social and emotional development. Westley (1992), supports this view in the statement, “Community is much more than a social reality, something humans can achieve by their will and their efforts. It is rather one of the most profound and important of the spiritual realities. As something ‘of the spirit’, it is also something of a mystery, more easily experienced than talked about” (p. 24).

The findings reveal that there are multiple components that contribute to the successful function of a community: class meetings, multi-age grouping, the environment, and autonomous learners. The class meetings are forums where children are empowered to voice their concerns or opinions on community-selected topics. Children are given the autonomy to hold these meetings, understand the rules that govern them, and be responsible members in that community. One respondent explained, “Our weekly class meeting give structure to the children… a voice in their own environment…the classroom is truly their place…they maintain the order, cleanliness, and help guide and shape policies and procedures together with adults. Children voice concerns and together they come up with solutions in a democratic way”.

This forum can be self-empowering for children as described by speaker D from the survey: “We hold community meetings… We understand that our schools aren’t
exempt from kids that can dominate other kids … be mean to them … be cruel to them … I
have to show a community to be strong, to rise to best self and counteract … those kinds
of influences.” Through these experiences, children gain knowledge and skills for life.

According to Montessori, the multi-age grouping is a microcosm for interdependence
among children, where exchange and cooperative learning can be nurtured through
apprenticeship and leadership within the community without the presence of competition
(Montessori, 1949). With multi-age grouping, children in the Montessori community are
encouraged to learn from their peers. Furthermore, the Montessori approach allows
younger children to be guided and mentored by older children. The reverse can also occur
at times, when an younger child reminds an older child of the function of their
community and their roles in keeping it safe.

The research literature reviewed in Chapter 2 supports the finding community is
effective in developing social and emotional skills and in preventing bullying in schools.
Moon’s (2009) personal talent theory states that the individual acquires knowledge and
skills to encourage achievement and promote well being. The acquisition of these skills in
a community are key elements of an affective curriculum.

The findings related to the function of a community have direct implications for
the problems of bullying. Bullying is a practice that is found within the socio-ecological
framework in schools. The influence of peers, teachers, administrators, playgrounds, and
classroom environments are linked to Bronfenbrenner’s nested contextual ecological
system. The interactions between and among individuals can be a preventative factor in
bullying, which the findings clearly demonstrate.
Gregory (2012) reaffirms this finding stating that there is a need to focus on developing positive communities in schools, “where every child gets a chance to gain social and emotional learning and character development; they need not only function in school, but succeed in life” (p. 80).

DASA is a step in building that kind of environment where bullying will not be tolerated and anti-social behavior is frowned upon. DASA states the importance of community–building among all constituencies and of engaging the whole school in creating a community that educates the whole child. DASA legislation suggests supporting children’s development of their social and emotional intelligence through the following four strategies: communities that support and challenge, self-study, study of others, and public performance.

These aforementioned DASA strategies offer hope in achieving social and emotional development among children. However, the uniformity of practice is left to the teacher, which leaves room for varied interpretations. Montessori lower elementary education provides homogenous training for all teachers, thus the implementation and practices are similar in Montessori schools across the United States. Hence, it is not surprising to find that Montessori environments, in general, create a community that is sacred, a safe haven for children, and where children feel empowered to speak up and address conflict as it occurs. The student bystanders become the whistle blowers, ensuring that their community remains intact.

**Teacher transformation in training.** The findings on teacher training were unexpected. The findings indicate that the transformation that occurs during the all day, nine-week intensive summer training and the one-year internship is a critical instrument
to guide Montessori peace education in the lower elementary classroom. The American
Montessori Society (AMS) and Association Montessori International (AMI) oversee
teacher training in the United States. Both governing bodies ensure that teachers receive a
quality education that is standard in all accredited programs. AMS and AMI provide a
unified program among institutions while developing valid and reliable standards for
continuing the evolution of the Montessori program throughout the United States and the
world (Lillard, 2005).

Teacher training in the Montessori educational model is a principal component in the
implementation of curriculum that begins before the teachers enter the classroom.
Speaker A from the focus group confirmed, “I think when they get back to their schools,
there is a whole bunch of trigger mechanisms that happen… the philosophy works
because…we teach so much curriculum impressionistically, we give them experiences
and their feelings that are related to these experiences, which include the kind of shy
reticence that they felt at the beginning of the games and then the feeling of warmth,
when they realize they have overcome that… they are one with their group….”

In the session with the faculty focus group, the “teacher-training” theme emerged,
and Speaker C discussed how this transformation continues to evolve throughout the
internship year. “When you look at them [teachers] in the first year… then when they
come back for the second part of their training… they are different people. You can see
the growth. They are more at home in their own skin, they are not so fearful of a new
lesson. They say, I wish I had done [it] that way… and that shows growth.”
The teacher transformation process is critical not only in Montessori but also in an affective education program. Gallavan and LeBlanc (2009) explain that transformation must occur among teachers in order for them to be effective in an affective curriculum:

Teacher candidates enter their teacher education programs bringing with them a wide range of personal characteristics based on their prior understanding and experiences that will manifest themselves in their pedagogical practices. Teacher educators are responsible for transforming the teaching candidate into a professional teacher who understands the importance and power of affective education and the role it plays in every aspect of the classroom. (p. 27)

The National Council for Accreditation for teacher education has been actively involved in raising awareness of the role of affective education in teacher education programs. Educators fear the use of further assessment tools on teachers will result in added responsibilities on teachers who have been deemed overburdened with departmental duties. Without additional monetary compensation, there is also a lack of incentive (McKenna, 2009).

The findings on the role of transformation in Montessori teacher education have tremendous implications for the future of our teachers. There have been discourses on the topic of teacher disposition in the implementation of affective curriculum. However, this has led to criticism and debate on the use of affective education in teacher education programs. McKenna (2009) believes the core of teacher education must be the development of teacher candidates as effective classroom practitioners regardless of their dispositions. The disposition assessment is intended as a tool for candidates to allow understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This tool can have a long-lasting effect.
by refining and mentoring teachers early before they get into bad habits. Teacher candidates and novice teachers often come to the classroom with very little preparation for effective teaching in social and emotional development.

Similar to Montessori, affective teacher education weaves knowledge, skills, teacher knowledge and beliefs about learning experiences. Unfortunately, in our public schools veteran teachers who are tenured have very little incentive to buy into these new approaches or to be retrained in affective education (Gallavan & LeBlanc, 2009). DASA has implemented regulations to enforce professional development in social and emotional teaching for teachers and administrators.

**Cosmic education, the holistic approach.** Cosmic education is the centerpiece of the Montessori lower elementary program. “Let us give the child a vision of the whole universe…for all things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity” (Montessori, 1948, p. 8). Cosmic education allows the miracles of the cosmos to fill the children with awe and wonder while they explore the wonderful history of creation and the all-encompassing discovery of the universe (Wolf, 1996).

The findings show that cosmic education is the core aspect of the Montessori lower elementary curriculum. The teachers, teaching faculty, and heads of schools explained how children read, study, and experience a deep understanding of relationships and develop an appreciation for the web of organisms which includes humans. In the data Speaker C from the focus group stated, “We brought them cosmic education—the fundamental needs lessons … study of another continent…How do they make their way given their land, and given their food—the whole circle of life. They don’t always do that in a traditional school. They don’t always have that integration of how people are living,
and making their way, and being important.” Speaker A strengthened this stance by saying, “They don’t always simultaneously talk about how people are the same and different. They usually talk about the differences or you talk about similarities. We usually ask kids to think about both of them at the same time. We’re all the same because we have the same needs, but actually what’s really cool is we can celebrate the ways that we meet our needs, which are all different. And that’s true for organisms and how they breathe; it’s true of cultures and how do they house themselves. It’s true for so many different things.”

It is through this comprehensive curriculum that children are given the opportunity to see hope and meaning in their lives. Peace is promoted through the realization that everything in the universe comes from one source. It is through this lens that children begin to see their roles as equals, and as mutual partners who protect one another and care for the planet earth (Wolf, 1996). The powerful sense of interconnectedness defines the purpose of living for each child. The conscious and subconscious are awakened by a deeper responsibility to a cosmic task (Duffy & Duffy, 2002). This process occurs naturally and effortlessly in the Montessori classroom as children follow the spiritual pathways of peace and harmony in their lives. This finding shows the benefits of an holistic approach, where all disciplines are intertwined as one and centered around the cosmos. The interviews also explained how each subject is presented as a life experience of their heritage in the classroom (Duffy & Duffy, 2002).

The implications of this finding are significant in that Montessori lower elementary education displays a well-embedded affective curriculum that has a holistic approach. It is not fragmented or pieced together; it is a system that works. Montessori’s
holistic quality allows for teachers with no experience to find immediate success. The findings reveal that this more than 100 year-old system works and is successful in addressing bullying. Whether the teacher is a veteran with 16 or more years of experience or a novice with only months of experience, a Montessori teacher can feel confident that she has all the tools necessary to promote the social and emotional development of children and create a peaceful environment. In the Montessori training, teachers are given a road map that allows them to experience a spiritual transformation in their lives. In the Montessori framework, everything works in harmony. The natural environment is created in the classroom, which fosters the social and emotional development of all children.

All the components of Montessori woven together create an environment that finds success in preventing and addressing bullying in Montessori lower elementary classrooms. This is what is lacking in the public schools and is what presents a new challenge for DASA, which has the same desired outcomes of Montessori. However, unlike Montessori, DASA does not have a cohesive affective curriculum for teachers to follow. Regulating and imposing elements of peace education may not be as effective. Some teachers will confront many obstacles as they try to synthesize disparate parts into a cohesive curriculum in order to fulfill mandated requirements.

The dissertation study brings to light the potential difficulties of successfully implementing new legislation like DASA. Birkland (2011) states that with all policies and laws, the real work begins with the application and follow through. The consistent evaluation will bring new ideas and ways to approach the bullying crisis in the United States to the forefront. However, now is the time to bring intuition and the proven success of the Montessori method to a policy that has the potential to provide hope for the
students of New York State who have suffered unnecessarily due to the current dearth of direction on how to create effective programs that promote the social and emotional development of children.

**Limitations**

The research was designed to obtain a national perspective from Montessori teachers around the United States; however, after several reminders, the response rate was 23%. Furthermore, 96% of the survey participants were from private schools and 75% were from suburban areas. A study of Montessori suburban private schools may have yielded results that are reflective of that environment.

Due to the time restrictions of the St. John Fisher doctoral program, a purposeful sampling was utilized in selecting one Montessori teacher training center. This AMS institution provided a limited view on the impact of teacher training in schools throughout the United States.

The study was limited to only AMS/AMI accredited schools in the United States. The process of accreditation is long and rigorous; therefore, the study captures a selective population characterized by being well established and having 14 plus years in existence.

The DASA policy is relatively new; it has only been in effect since September 2012. Lastly, complications with online digital recording limited the sample size of those interviewed from four to two. In the final analysis, only two interviews were used in the study.
While statistical significance was not found in the study due to the small response rate, triangulation provided rich data from which key themes and concepts emerged. These themes and concepts provide insight and wisdom for future studies.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations can be given to educators, administrators, parents, and policy makers, which will provide a broad new perspective into the influence of Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy for peace in the United States. It is recommended that larger scale studies be done on Montessori education as pedagogy for peace. Future studies should include all levels of Montessori programs from toddler to secondary, which will give a comprehensive look at Montessori education.

**Further research.** The results revealed that the teacher’s role is a significant channel for peace education in an affective curriculum. It is recommended that further studies be done to examine the role of teacher disposition as an effective tool in peace education. This research would have additional implications for teacher education programs.

The findings also suggest further studies on pathways to accomplish the standards written in the DASA policy. Moreover, the study has shown ways cosmic education and a holistic approach to curriculum has been successful. Educators, parents, administrators, and policy makers could benefit from looking at the Montessori lower elementary education as a model for affective teaching.

**Professional practice.** Although the DASA has been well researched, there are still gaps in the policy that need to be examined. The implications of the study lead to the
recommendation for ongoing research on affective education, which will inform delivery and implementation of the DASA policy. Secondly, it is essential that teachers and administrators reflect on their roles as instruments in promoting peace in schools. It is recommended that teachers and administrators carefully examine the DASA and participate in developing a holistic curriculum that offers real life experiences to guide daily problem solving, help build social and emotional skills, and prevent further bullying incidents in schools.

The findings reveal that Montessori lower elementary education has many elements found in an affective curriculum. The teachers indicate the Montessori approach is successfully preventing bullying incidents in their schools. The survey data reveal that bullying occurs rarely in Montessori lower elementary classrooms. Furthermore, the findings show that regardless of the number of years of experience, Montessori teachers are successful in creating a peaceful environment that rarely includes bullying.

With the increased frequency of bullying within the past two months, we must act promptly. We must not wait any longer and risk the death of another child. Montessori education serves as the catalyst for re-committing to putting the child at the center of education. The approach surrenders to the child’s natural tendency toward creating a better world and give of themselves in this service. This important cultural theme is linked closely to Montessori cultural studies and Cosmic Education. Montessori education lays a strong foundation for the holistic development of the human being by providing an environment designed to meet the specific needs of the individual. If we view social justice through the lens of education, it is clear that the Montessori philosophy embraces this concept. Montessori believed that social change is dependent
upon the education of young children. We must bring practices such as Montessori to
guide and give a pathway for the development of social and emotional skills in the new
DASA policy.

Conclusion

As bullying among students continues to be a problem in schools and the numbers
of incidents are increasing, there is an urgent need to find solutions to address this crisis
in the United States. The Sandy Hook Elementary massacre in December 2012 and the
shootings at the Taft High School in January 2013 indicate the reality that conflict and
violence persist in schools, making them unsafe for children. In an effort to address these
concerns, the dissertation study examines the current Montessori lower elementary
education model as a framework for addressing bullying through an embedded affective
curriculum. In addition, the study examines the Dignity for All Students Act 2012
(DASA), a law designed to curtail bullying in New York State schools in the twenty-first
century. The study investigates how DASA aligns with Montessori Education that has
been in existence since 1911.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of curriculum in shaping
educational policy as an effective framework to address the social concerns of bullying in
the 21st century. The research focuses on Montessori education as pedagogy for peace,
and how the Montessori lower elementary curriculum addresses bullying, a serious social
problem in schools across the nation. In addition, the study analyzes the Montessori
peace initiatives with the policy implications of the DASA, as a law attempting to address
bullying through enforcement and monitoring. The research considers how policy could
adopt an embedded social-emotional curriculum such as a peace curriculum to prevent
bullying. The study seeks to demonstrate that a curriculum design for social and emotional development fosters an environment that encourages healthy and positive interactions among children.

The theory of social ecology of human development guides and unites the socio-cultural principles that frame the study while bringing greater depth and comprehension to the study. Bronfenbrenner’s work emphasizes the role of critical environmental components, which help children understand and experience the complexity of human development.

The examination of the Montessori lower elementary education uses a mixed methods approach. The research study includes quantitative and qualitative perspectives in a concurrent triangular design. The research collects both quantitative and qualitative data to show whether there are convergences, differences, and/or some combination. The use of three different measures supports and reduces apparent weakness present in one method with the strength in the other, balancing the instruments to arrive at well-validated and substantiated study.

The research involves three phases using qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data on the effectiveness of the Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy for peace. Participants were selected from 5000 Montessori schools in the United States. A purposive sampling is used to create a homogenous sub-group of 150 accredited American Montessori Society (AMS)/Association of Montessori International (AMI) private, public, and charter Montessori elementary schools grades 1 through 3. Three instruments are used: a survey distributed to 150 teachers nationwide, a focus
group conducted with four faculty members of a national Montessori teacher training program, and two interviews held with previous and current heads of school.

The mixed methods study provides supportive data and reduces the apparent weakness that present in the interviews with the strength of both the survey and focus group. This method allows the gathering of rich data, and brought clarity and understanding to key initiatives discovered in the Montessori lower elementary educational model.

The triangulated results reveal that community, environment, community meeting, cosmic education, teacher training, role of teacher in the classroom, embedded curriculum, and a holistic approach have a direct influence on Montessori peace education as it addresses bullying in the twenty-first century. Data analysis indicates several significant findings on how the Montessori lower elementary educational model serves to address the social and emotional development of children and function as a deterrent to bullying in the twenty-first century. The teacher survey, the faculty focus group, and the head of school interviews provide insight into the salient issue of bullying in schools. The study outlines the integral components of the Montessori peace education initiatives. Teacher’s role, community, teacher training, embedded curriculum, cosmic education and holistic approach are key elements that shape the Montessori educational model in grades 1 through 3.

The teacher survey findings provide the quantitative data for the study; however, the comments and open-ended questions add a supportive layer to the statistical data. Although the demographics show most teachers were from private schools in the suburban eastern region of the United States, the study was rich in significant themes and
concepts that emerged addressing all the research questions. The descriptive statistics show trends and patterns. The faculty focus group reveals “teacher training” as an important function in the Montessori educational model, and the head of school interviews strengthened the study by giving supplementary narrative to support the survey data.

The findings reveal that Montessori lower elementary education has many elements found in an affective curriculum. It is successfully preventing bullying incidents in their schools. The survey data reveals that bullying occurs rarely in Montessori lower elementary classrooms. Furthermore, the findings show that regardless of the number of years of experience, Montessori teachers are successful in creating a peaceful environment that rarely includes bullying. The study provides insight into how the Montessori lower elementary education, specifically the Montessori cosmic education, can be an effective model in the implementation of the DASA. The data shows that Montessori lower elementary education meets all the standards written in the DASA and provides additional initiatives to consider in the development of affective curriculum. The study reveals that Montessori lower elementary education has a holistic approach towards peace education, which is woven into its academic curriculum.

Montessori’s holistic quality allows for teachers with no experience to find immediate success. The findings reveal that this more than 100 year-old system works and is successful in addressing bullying. Whether the teacher is a veteran teacher with 16 or more years of experience or a novice, a Montessori teacher can feel confident that she has all the tools necessary to promote the social and emotional development of children and create a peaceful environment. In the Montessori training, teachers are given a road
map and have experienced a spiritual transformation in their lives. In the Montessori framework, everything works in harmony; the natural environment is created in the classroom fostering the social and emotional development of all children. In addition, Montessori teachers are taught how to speak to children in a positive tone and style.

The findings show evidence that Montessori serves as a model that is comprehensive. All components of Montessori woven together create an environment that finds success at preventing and addressing bullying in Montessori lower elementary classrooms. The implications of these finding are significant and have potential to bring great insight to DASA, a new four month-old policy.

This presents a new challenge for DASA, which has the same desired outcome of Montessori; however, in DASA, there is no woven affective curriculum for teachers to follow. Regulating and imposing elements of peace education may not be as effective. Some teachers will confront many obstacles in piecing together lessons here and there to fulfill the mandated requirements.

The examination of the Montessori lower elementary education model brings a new framework to consider in addressing the bullying crisis in the United States. Now is the time to bring insight and perspicacity to the DASA, a policy of hope for the children of New York State.

The Montessori lower elementary framework acts as the vehicle for re-commitment of putting the child at the core of education, yielding to the child’s natural inclination toward creating a better world, and giving of himself in this service. The findings of the study are directly linked to this social justice provision. Montessori lower elementary education lays a solid base for the holistic advancement of all children by
providing an environment that attends to the specific needs of all children. It is evident that the Montessori lower elementary education embraces the concept of social justice, teaching that social change is reliant upon the education of young children. “Social justice is more than an ethical imperative; it is a foundation for national stability and global prosperity. Equal opportunity, solidarity, and respect for human rights—these are essential to unlocking the full productive potential of nations and peoples…” (Ki-moon, 2011).
References

Affective Teacher Education. (2007). *Affective Education Commision Resolution*. ATE.


Gabbatt, A. N. (2012). National: Newton massacre: Sandy Hook was a peaceful, idyllic retreat... *The Observer*, 1-3.


Appendix A

Teacher Survey Questionnaire

Examining the Montessori Lower Elementary Education as Pedagogy for Peace

Q1.2 Please type name (Participant)

Q1.3 I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

☐ Yes
☐ No

Q4.1 What aspects of the Montessori lower elementary classroom support peace education?

Q4.2 Which of the following lessons/activities are present, if any, to encourage a peaceful community in your lower elementary classroom?

☐ Peace Circle Lesson
☐ Peace Table
☐ "I" Messages
☐ International Peace Day
☐ Conflict Resolution
☐ Peace Rose
☐ Exercises from the Honoring the Light of the Child Book
☐ Peer Mediation
Q4.3 Other than those listed above, what curriculum components do you practice to encourage a peaceful community in the lower elementary classroom?

Q4.4 How important are the following elements in developing a peaceful classroom?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Neither Important nor Unimportant</th>
<th>Somewhat Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Not at all Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montessori Cosmic Education</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher's Role</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montessori Materials</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q5.1 About how often do you face challenges in the ways children interact with their peers?

- ○ Never
- ○ Less than Once a Month
- ○ Once a Month
- ○ 2-3 Times a Month
- ○ Once a Week
- ○ 2-3 Times a Week
- ○ Several times a day
Q5.2 What kinds of challenges do you face in the classroom and how do you address them?

Q5.3 How often are you forced to intervene in peer conflict resolution in the lower elementary classroom or on the playground?

- Never
- Less than Once a Month
- Once a Month
- 2-3 Times a Month
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- Daily

Q5.4 Do you agree that a peaceful classroom in Montessori teaches children how to resolve disagreements?

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q5.5 Montessori lower elementary education provides the children with the skills needed to have a deeper understanding of themselves

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
Q5.6  How often do children demonstrate peacefully interactions with others?

- Never
- Less than Once a Month
- Once a Month
- 2-3 Times a Month
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- Daily

Q6.1  The rules and regulations at your school clearly define the following?

| Protect children from becoming bullies | | | | |
| Protect victims of bullying | | | | |
| Prevent conflicts of the playground | | | | |

Q6.2  How often do you document incidents of bullying in your school?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Most of the Time
- Always
Q6.3 What happens in the lower elementary program when a child reports that they have been insulted, teased and harassed by another student?

- Teacher encourages the use of conflict resolution.
- Teacher addresses the issue by having a discussion with the children involved
- Lesson on peace is given
- Community Meeting is held
- Comment ____________________

Q6.4 How often do you have staff meetings?

- Never
- Less than Once a Month
- Once a Month
- 2-3 Times a Month
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- Daily

Q6.5 How frequently do you receive professional development workshops or seminars on Peace Education at your school?

- Never
- Less than Once a Month
- Once a Month
- 2-3 Times a Month
- Once a Week
- 2-3 Times a Week
- Daily
Q6.6  About what percentage of the staff meetings are dedicated to discuss student conflict resolutions?

- 100%
- 75%
- 50%
- 25%
- Not at all

Q3.1  What year was your school established?

- 2000-2012
- 1999-1990
- 1989-1980
- 1979- Prior

Q3.2  Where is your school located?

- Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)
- Southeast (Florida, Georgia, Arkansas, North Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina)
- Mid-Atlantic (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Virginia, New York, West Virginia)
- Mid-West (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin)
- Southwest (Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Hawaii)
Q3.3 Which term best describes your school's location?
- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

Q3.4 Which of the following category best describes your school?
- Private (a school that is not run by the government and therefore charges fees for tuition)
- Public (a state funded elementary or secondary school providing free education)
- Public Charter (public schools of choice that are tax-supported and open to all students)

Q3.5 Is your school accredited by one of the following?
- AMI-Association Montessori International
- AMS- American Montessori Society
- Other (Please specify) ____________________

Q3.6 How many 6-9 classrooms do you have at your school?
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- Other Amount (Please Specify) ____________________
Q3.7 Which of the following, if any, peace programs do you use in your classroom?

☐ Teaching Tolerance
☐ The Global Peace Plan
☐ Peace Education in UNICEF
☐ Kids for Peace Program
☐ Pennies for Peace
☐ Living Values
☐ Heifer International's GET IT
☐ Anti-bullying Programs
☐ Little Friends for Peace
☐ Other (Please specify) ____________________
☐ No other peace programs are use at your school.

Q2.1 1. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

☐ Graduated from high school
☐ 1 year of college
☐ 2 years of college
☐ 3 years of college
☐ Undergraduate degree
☐ Some graduate school
☐ Graduate degree
☐ Post graduate
☐ Doctoral degree

Q2.2 What Montessori certifications have you obtained? Select all that apply.

☐ Infant/Toddler
☐ Early Childhood
☐ Elementary
☐ Middle School
☐ High School
☐ Administration/Management
☐ None
Q2.3  What Montessori training do you have?

☐ AMI
☐ AMS
☐ Other ____________________

Q2.4  How many years of experience do you have as a Montessori teacher?

☐ 0-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ 11-15 years
☐ 16+ years

Thank you for sharing your time and expertise, I sincerely appreciate your assistance. I look forward to sharing the results of this study with you and the Montessori Community.

Sincerely,

Vanessa M. Rigaud
Doctoral Candidate at St. John Fisher College
vmr03485@sjfc.edu
347-389-0181
Appendix B

Expert Validation Instructions Letter

Dear ________________________:

Thank you for your interest and desire to be a part of my doctoral study. You are member of a team of five Montessorian experts participating in this national evaluative study of the Montessori Peace Education program. This study involves sending out survey questionnaires national wide.

Your input will help validate of content the survey and interview questions that will be used in this study. In this judgment-qualification, you will independently review the survey instrument and interview questions, and rate each item of relevance according to the content domain.

First, review the survey questionnaire and the interview questions that are attached to this email. Afterwards, cut and paste the following link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WVD97H3 and follow the instructions below:

Please review consent form letter and sign. Then insert your background information. Afterwards, the survey questionnaire process will begin. Please evaluate each of the following survey and interview questions. Use the checklist below for each question to expedite your assessment- a key is provided. Rate each question 1, 2, 3, or 4 based on your knowledge and experience. Select only one. Comments are optional in the space provided for each survey and interview question.

1= NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire
2= UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: Rewrite
3= RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION
4= VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT

Thank you for sharing your time and expertise. I sincerely appreciate your assistance. I look forward to sharing the results of this study with you and the Montessori Community.

Sincerely,
Appendix C

Survey Questionnaire Evaluation

*Instructions: Please evaluate each of the following survey questions. Use the checklist at the right to expedite your assessment—a key is provided. Circle the appropriate response(s). Comments can be made in the space below each survey question.*

4 = VERY RELEVANT AND SUCCINCT  
3 = RELEVANT BUT NEEDS MINOR ALTERATION  
2 = UNABLE TO ASSESS RELEVANCE WITHOUT ITEM REVISION: Rewrite  
1 = NOT RELEVANT: Omit from the questionnaire

### Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When was your school established?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Where is your school located?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Which of the following categories best describes your school?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What is your designated affiliation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Does your school incorporate any other peace program in conjunction to the Montessori Peace Education?</td>
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</table>

### Implementation of the Montessori Peace Education Program

6. How often does your school implement peace education as a
direct instruction? Direct instruction is where the teacher teaches the children a variety of social skills in large or small group lessons.

7. What are the top three Montessori Peace Education program practices at your school? Please select the top three practices.

8. How frequently is the Montessori Peace Education Program taught as an indirect instruction. Indirect instruction involves creating a classroom environment that fosters positive affective development throughout the curriculum.

9. How important is the role of the teacher in the Montessori Peace Education program?

10. In your school, the Montessori Peace Education is implemented as an indirect instruction by means of the following methods: (Please rating them by order of importance.)

11. How large a role does the classroom environment play in the Montessori Peace Education program?

12. How frequently do teachers receive professional development workshops or seminars on the Montessori Peace Education program at your school?

---

**Social and Emotional Development**

13. How frequently does the Montessori Peace Education program fosters social and emotional development of the children at your school?
14. How often does your school face challenges that effect the safe, supportive and respectful environment for your children?

15. How often do children learn ways to resolve disagreements and obtain a favorable outcome?

16. How aware are your teachers of the potential vulnerability of gifted children?

17. How clear are the procedures to respond to social and emotional needs of gifted children?

18. The Montessori Peace Education provides the children with the skills needed to develop self-esteem and achieve personal talent by being able to set goals and have a deeper understanding of themselves.

19. How often do your children demonstrate peacefully interactions with others and the respect for diversity.

Bullying
20. How clear are rules and regulations defined at your school to protect children from becoming bullies and being victims of bullying?

1 2 3 4

21. During a week, how frequently do children have conflict on the playground?

1 2 3 4

22. During a week, how often do you receive incident reports from teachers of conflict among peers in the classroom?

1 2 3 4

23. During a week, how often do children report that they have been insulted, teased, and harassed in your school?

1 2 3 4

24. How often do teacher and administrators find themselves addressing issues of conflict resolutions in staff meetings?

1 2 3 4

25. How often do teachers serve as mediators for conflicts among students?

1 2 3 4
Appendix D

Introductory Survey Letter

November 3, 2012

Dear ______________________________:

As a well-informed head of school, you are aware of the increasing school violence and bullying that is present in our schools across the United States. As Montessorians, we are fortunate to have a model of education that has been effective in dealing with bullying in the classroom for the past century. As part of my research at Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education/St. John Fisher College, I will conduct an examination of the Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy for peace: A study of an alternative model to address the impact of bullying in schools. I will investigate the degree of affective influence of the Montessori Peace Education on bullying, and its impact on the social and emotional needs of children in Montessori lower elementary classrooms throughout the United States. I will explore the Montessori Peace Education and provide supportive data as to why children need an affective curriculum to combat bullying in the 21st century. This study will offer guidance to educators, parents, counselors, and administrators, policy makers and emphasize the need for affective curricula in all schools to prevent the bullying.

Your participation in this survey, while voluntary, is vital to the success of this study because each of your responses represents those of many other Montessori schools. I want to assure you that the results will remain anonymous, neither personal
identification nor identification of the schools will be identifiable in this research study. Names of the participants will be coded as unidentifiable numbers by the “Qualtrics” software in order to ensure anonymity. The findings of this survey will be reported only in statistical tables and summaries as part of the results for my dissertation “Examining the Montessori Lower Elementary Education as Pedagogy for Peace: A study of an alternative model to address bullying in schools”.

I am requesting your assistance to complete this study. Please ask one of one lower elementary teacher to follow this link and complete this survey. It is estimated that the survey should take less than thirty minutes. At the conclusion of my study, I plan to provide each respondent with a summary of the results of the investigation. I would like to express my gratitude in advance for your cooperation in this important undertaking. If you have any questions about the study or the survey questionnaire, please do not hesitate to call me at 347-389-0181 or e-mail me at vmr03485@sjfc.edu.

Respectfully yours,

Vanessa M. Rigaud
Doctoral Candidate at St. John Fisher College
Appendix E

Focus Group Questions

1. What does peace education mean to you in the context of a consultant and faculty member of a Montessori training program?

2. Do you believe that training programs have a role in transforming teachers to implement the Montessori philosophy? Is so, why? If not, why not?

3. What role does the teacher play in the Montessori education as pedagogy for peace?

4. What practices and rituals contribute to the pedagogy of peace in Montessori education?

5. Do you believe that there can be a disconnect in understanding the philosophy of Maria Montessori and the actual implementation by teachers in the classroom? What contributes to that disconnect?

6. Do you think Montessori Education has played a constructive role in reducing bullying in Montessori schools? If so, what role has it played? If not, why not?
Appendix F

Participant’s Survey Consent Form

St. John Fisher College

Title of study: “Examining the Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy of peace: A study of an alternative framework to address bullying in schools”.

Name of researcher: Vanessa M. Rigaud 347-389-0181 vmr03485@sjfc.edu

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Frances Wills

Purpose of study: The purpose of this study is to examine the role of curriculum in shaping an effective policy to address the social concerns of bullying in the 21st century. The research will focus on Montessori education as pedagogy for peace and how the Montessori lower elementary curriculum addresses bullying, a significant social problem in schools across the nation. In addition, this study will compare the Montessori peace initiatives with the policy implications of the Dignity for All Students Act 2012, a New York State law that attempts to address bullying through enforcement and monitoring. The researcher will attempt to find out how policy could embrace an embedded social emotional curriculum such as a peace curriculum to prevent bullying and foster an environment that encourages healthy and positive interactions among children.

This examination will offer educators, administrators, parents, and policy makers insight into the degree of influence of the Montessori lower elementary education curriculum as pedagogy for peace has had in the past 100 years in the United States and provide substantiation of its practical response to bullying. This study will also be instrumental in guiding our leaders in public education in evaluating policy, program, and curriculum that are present in our school systems and finding solutions to the critical issue of bullying in the 21st century.

Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Place of Study: United States

Potential Risks: There are no expected risks in participating in this study. Participant’s confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained at all times. All information provided by the participants will be maintained in locked filing cabinet.
Potential Benefits: The results of this study may provide scholars and educators with a better understanding of the Montessori Peace Education program as an affective curriculum. The study finding may contribute and shed light on the issue of combating bullying in the 21st century in elementary schools.

Methods of protecting confidentiality/privacy: The survey questionnaire will be administrated through the Survey Money web platform. Names of the participants will be coded as unidentifiable numbers by the software in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Your Rights: As a research participant you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

 Print name (Participant)  Signature  Date

 Print name (Investigator)  Signature  Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you or your child experiences emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, contact the Office of Academic Affairs at (585) 385-8034 or the Wellness Center at (585) 385-8280 for appropriate referrals.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above.
Appendix G

Focus Group Consent Form

St. John Fisher College

Title of study: “Examining the Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy of peace: A study of an alternative framework to address bullying in schools”.

Name of researcher: Vanessa M. Rigaud  347-389-0181  vmr03485@sjfc.edu

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Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Place of Study: United States

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_______________________________    ________________________________    __________________________
Print Name (Participant)    Signature    Date

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Print Name (Investigator)    Signature    Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you or your child experiences emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, contact the Office of Academic Affairs at (585) 385-8034 or the Wellness Center at (585) 385-8280 for appropriate referrals.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above.
Appendix H

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How does the Montessori lower elementary educational model create a classroom environment that fosters positive affective development throughout the curriculum?

2. What is the role of the teacher in the implementation of the peace in the classroom?

3. Please state the components or approaches of Montessori Peace Education program that you consider effective?

4. Do you think the Montessori Peace Education program has been beneficial to the social and emotional development of children in the elementary classroom? If so, how has it? If not, why not?

5. Do you think the Montessori Peace Education program has played a role in the prevention of bullying your school? If so, what role? If not, why not?
Appendix I

Interview Consent Form

St. John Fisher College

Title of study: “Examining the Montessori lower elementary education as pedagogy of peace: A study of an alternative framework to address bullying in schools”.

Name of researcher: Vanessa M. Rigaud 347-389-0181 vmr03485@sjfc.edu

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Frances Wills

Purpose of study: The purpose of this study is to examine the role of curriculum in shaping an effective policy to address the social concerns of bullying in the 21st century. The research will focus on Montessori education as pedagogy for peace and how the Montessori lower elementary curriculum addresses bullying, a significant social problem in schools across the nation. In addition, this study will compare the Montessori peace initiatives with the policy implications of the Dignity for All Students Act 2012, a New York State law that attempts to address bullying through enforcement and monitoring. The researcher will attempt to find out how policy could embrace an embedded social emotional curriculum such as a peace curriculum to prevent bullying and foster an environment that encourages healthy and positive interactions among children.

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Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Place of Study: United States

Potential Risks: There are no expected risks in participating in this study. Participant’s confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained at all times. All information provided by the participants will be maintained in locked filing cabinet.
**Potential Benefits:** The results of this study may provide scholars and educators with a better understanding of the Montessori Peace Education program as an affective curriculum. The study finding may contribute and shed light on the issue of combating bullying in the 21st century in elementary schools.

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2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

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If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you or your child experiences emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, contact the Office of Academic Affairs at (585) 385-8034 or the Wellness Center at (585) 385-8280 for appropriate referrals.

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