Combating Bullying:

_Educating the Heart Through Emotional Intelligence_

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Abstract

Bullying has taken a pervasive stance in Canada and across the globe. The gap between bullying prevention and intervention is still prevalent, and research showcases that there is a strong correlation amongst bullying prevention and the teachings of emotional intelligence. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate how elementary school teachers are implementing customized bullying prevention programs that focus on the development of emotional intelligence skills as a means of combating bullying. This research study includes a review of the literature in the field, and the conclusions generated from three interviews with elementary educators. The findings outlined that self-awareness, respect, empathy, and advocating for oneself are core characteristics necessary in the development of emotional aptitude. The findings also identified demographics, cultural and socioeconomic diversity, home and life experiences, and board and school wide policies, as factors that support and challenge teacher efforts to promote emotional learning. Participants recognized the significance of fostering a safe and inviting classroom environment, with a focus on building relationships grounded in mutual trust and respect. Contributors encouraged the utilization of tailored strategies framed through the lens of developing emotional vocabulary, student voice, recognition, decision-making, goal setting, and accountability.

Key Words:

• Bullying
• Bullying Prevention & Intervention
• Emotional Intelligence

• Classroom Environment
• Teaching the Whole Child
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Chapter #1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction to Research Study

Teasing, stalking, tormenting, harassing, threatening, pushing – these are but a few of the horrific forms of bullying that one in every three Canadian children experience throughout their lifetime (Canadian Bullying Statistics, 2012). The concept of bullying in schools is no recent phenomenon, but in current years, as more high profile cases have been released in the media, bullying has taken a pervasive stance in Canada and across the globe. The chilling, yet inspiring story of Amanda Todd, is one that has received a lot of attention, and has sparked controversy and concern throughout the media world and within schools. Amanda, a 15-year-old girl from British Columbia, ended her own life after being bullied and blackmailed for years by an online stalker, and further beaten and ostracized by her peers at school (Lau, 2012). After her death, the media released some haunting messages shared by Amanda during her struggle, “Do you know how many times I’ve heard ‘nobody likes you or wants you here, go back to where you came from’. Or ‘if you died I would throw a party’. Ever since all this happened I would cry myself to sleep because it hurts no matter what. Please, please, just help me…” (Lau, 2012). Amanda’s heart wrenching cry for help represents the feelings of so many children around the world who are forced to feel helpless, scared, and alone.

It has been said, “bullying is not just a harmless rite of passage or an inevitable part of growing up” (Gardner, 2013, p. 17). In recent years, stories like Amanda’s have brought this passage to life, and added another level of depth to an already complex issue that cannot be ignored. Gardner (2013) identifies that victims of bullying, and bullies themselves, are at a higher risk of developing emotional disorders during adulthood, and are more likely to contemplate or plan suicide. The story of Amanda Todd, and other cases surrounding similar bullying-persisted tragedies, are associated with great emotional and financial costs, and have brought the issue of bullying to the forefront of the minds of parents, teachers, and educators alike (Gardner, 2013).

1.1 Research Context & Problem

A point of contention surrounding Amanda Todd’s case lies in the delayed reaction of the police force. It was said that the police had a lead on Amanda’s tormentor months before her suicide (CBC News, 2014). According to CBC News (2014), it was only after her death that the
investigation to find her stalker truly took form. It begs the question, if something was done earlier, could it have saved Amanda’s life?

The dictionary defines reaction as an action performed in response to a situation or event (Dictionary.com Unabridged, N.D.). It is not to say that reactionary measures have not led to school-wide programs, and provincial standards and bills that have built awareness and structure around a complex issue. However, in the context of schools, research suggests the problem becomes that an educators’ ability to utilize information and recognize situations is hindered by the copious amount of policy and guidelines, and therefore the response to bullying often becomes reactionary (Graybill, Marshall, Meyers, Skoczylas & Varjas, 2009). It is said that teachers fall into a trap of ‘uncertainty avoidance’, as many teachers do not feel comfortable or well equipped to discuss the issue, therefore, choose to only intervene when overt physical acts arise (Marshall et al, 2009). Currently, school boards have placed a large emphasis on anti-bullying policies and the creation and implementation of reactive intervention programs. This usually takes the form of higher-level school-wide initiatives that focus on school environments, rules and regulations, the definitions of bullying and related terminology, and approaches to handling bullying situations, including statements regarding consequences and contact with parents (TDSB, 2014). The Toronto District School Board (2014) has implemented a Caring and Safe Schools’ policy, created progressive discipline and intervention procedures, and initiated a bullying and awareness prevention week. They also speak to the responsibility of each individual school, in creating their own bullying prevention strategies (TDSB, 2014). However, this does not provide schools with actionable measures to implement preventative school and classroom procedures. As discussed, there is an abundance of policy and procedures that focus on how to intervene during bullying situations. However, not enough attention is spent on educating teachers, and emphasizing proactive classroom measures that can be taken to prevent bullying behaviours at the foundation of where most bullying begins, in an elementary school classroom.

Recent literature suggests that effective prevention of harassment, intimidation, and bullying involves a more balanced approach of both proactive and reactive measures (Elias, Green, Kellner & O’Neil, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to create a multimodal approach where interventional and preventative measures are taken at the school, class, and student level (Evans, Gullotta & Plant, 2012). It is important to take a few steps back and recognize that prevention does not only comprise of the development and implementation of rules and regulations, but also
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includes cultivating the skills necessary for children to face difficult situations in a positive and constructive manner. Therefore, a focus of bullying prevention should be placed on supporting students with the tools and skill sets necessary to effectively understand, vocalize, and deal with their emotions (Elias & Harriett, 2006). Thus, research suggests that by empowering learners to deal with their emotions, it enables them to overcome challenges, minimizes the severity of any given event, and optimally reduces the amount of classroom bullying (Elias & Harriett, 2006).

Over 2,000 years ago, Plato stated, “all learning has an emotional base” (As cited in Darling-Hammond, Kirsch, Lit, Martin, Orcutt & Strobel, 2005). In recent times, this phenomenon has caught on and cognitive and psychological research has suggested that a child’s emotional state plays a critical role in their ability to act and learn (Darling-Hammond et al, 2005; Goldstein, Jeffrey, 2012; Zhu & Thagard, 2002). It is integral to note that children must learn how to express and regulate their own emotions as it plays an essential part of interaction, coping with social and personal problems, and also inherently plays a critical role in impacting the lives of others (Zhu & Thagard, 2002). Zhu & Thagard (2002) explain that our emotions can influence the generation of an action in two major ways: the tendency and readiness to act, and the decision to act. Although action may precede emotion, it is our ability to control our behaviours that becomes important in following through with the decision to act (Zhu & Thagard, 2002). As evidenced, there is an unavoidable correlation between emotion and action. Therefore, it is essential that parents and educators guide children to find ways of understanding, communicating, managing, and controlling their emotional states.

Learning how to manage ones feelings, and understanding and responding to emotions are said to heavily contribute to a person’s success in life (Darling-Hammond et al, 2005; Elias, Kantor & Romasz, 2004; Goleman, 2001) The term ‘emotional intelligence’ was coined to describe ones ability to identify, control, and evaluate your own emotions, and those of others (Cherry, 2014; Goleman, 2001; Romasz, et al., 2004). Research suggests that emotional intelligence can be learned and strengthened throughout a child’s lifetime, and it becomes critical to begin to develop and apply these characteristics at an early age (Cherry, 2014).

From a baby’s first breath, children have powerful emotional needs, and often time these needs go unmet because children are not exposed to the appropriate environments and are not taught to understand and express their own feelings (Riethmayer, N.D.). Therefore, bullies may lack this quality of emotional intelligence and consequently are unable to show empathy, which
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does not allow them to appreciate the emotional consequences of their behaviours on other people’s feelings (Paolo et al, 2006). The voices of taunting, bullying, and harassing of classmates are direct responses to those unmet or distorted emotional needs (Riethmayer, N.D.). Teachers cannot feel for students, however, they can create an emotionally stimulating and safe learning environment where students can take risks, make mistakes, and promote the development and utilization of the characteristics that support high emotional intelligence. The relationship between emotional intelligence, decision-making, and action, serve as a bright light in assisting classroom teachers in creating an environment that promotes strong emotional intelligence as a central focus for preventing classroom bullying (Riethmayer, N.D.).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate how elementary school teachers are implementing customized bullying prevention programs into their classrooms, that focus on the development of strong emotional intelligence as a means of combating bullying. This research paper specifically sought to determine the components of the classroom environment, structure and culture, the student-teacher relationship, and actionable strategies and best practices that can be built into the design of a lesson to foster emotional intelligence in the classroom. This study will be imperative to bring light to the immense correlation between bullying and emotional intelligence, and how the development of strong emotional aptitude can lead to better quality relationships and a reduction in the amount of classroom bullying.

1.3 Major Research Questions

Overall, the major question that this research sought to answer was: what is a sample of elementary school teachers doing to cultivate a classroom environment that prioritizes emotional intelligence, why is this critical to student learning, and what impact do they observe these practices have on bullying behaviours? More specifically, how do these teachers conceptualize the meaning of emotional intelligence in theory and in practice? What instructional strategies and approaches do these teachers enact and why? And what factors and/or resources support and challenge the work of these teachers?
1.4 Background of the Researcher

Over the course of the last few years, I was unable to feel a spark or connection with my work in the business world. As I reflected on my desires and goals, I realized that I do not have to compromise who I am. At the core all along has been my love for children, and my unwavering need to pursue a career that truly touches people’s lives. These changes in my own life, have forced me to question how a child’s early education truly shapes their mindset, careers, and ultimately the people they choose to be throughout their lives. As a future educator, I am not looking to only check off the boxes of a curriculum. I hope to foster the life skills that go well beyond the four walls of a classroom, and support the development of an innate understanding and acceptance of ones’ self.

Bullying is an issue that has become very close to my heart. During my first teaching placement, I was exposed to a bullying situation between two of my students. From my perspective, it was a situation that was already well established in its roots, and it became one that teachers were well aware of, but did not know what else to do to alleviate the issue. From my first day in the classroom, I had this inherent need to mend the relationship. Nothing I tried seemed to work, and I struggled to find the right balance of providing both the victim and the bully with support and guidance. While I was sitting with the student who was partaking in the bullying, I asked her to try for a minute to put herself in the victims position. I then asked her to go home and write a letter to the other girl, and explain her own feelings. The next day, as she opened up about herself, she revealed that there was so much more to her story, she also used to be bullied, and was carrying those feelings around with her. Even if it was just for a moment, I saw something in their relationship change. I saw an understanding develop, one that was previously clouded by anger and resentment. For those few minutes, the bully was able to confront her experiences, and make the connection to how her actions were hurting somebody else. Empathy is a characteristic that I believe can be taught in the right environment, and can arm children with the emotional aptitude that can positively impact their actions and decisions.

Today’s children are tomorrow’s leaders, and something more has to be done to tackle this real and frightening issue of bullying. The gap between intervention and prevention is still prevalent, and I believe the strong correlation amongst bullying and emotional intelligence is one that we cannot ignore. If emotion can impact action, then we must intervene to ensure children can detect, understand, and regulate their emotions in positive and enlightened ways.
1.5 Research Study Overview

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and context of the topic of discussion, the problem that this research seeks to address, the purpose for the study, and the fundamental questions that will be addressed throughout this paper, along with my personal positioning around the subject matter. Chapter 2 contains a thorough review of the current literature as it relates to emotional intelligence and its correlation to bullying. Chapter 3 details the overall methodology and design used to dictate the qualitative research that took place in the form of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This chapter outlines the specific procedures, instruments, participants, data analytical techniques, and addresses the possible ethical components and limitations within the study. Chapter 4 discusses the research findings and overall connections to the literature. Lastly, Chapter 5 identifies the implications and recommendations for teachers and the educational community.
Chapter #2: Literature Review

2.0 Chapter Overview

The following literature review provides a thorough examination of key themes that are based on significant research in the field of bullying and emotional intelligence, an investigation of comparative and contrasting viewpoints, as well as my personal positioning as it correlates to the above driving questions.

In order to provide a holistic understanding of the key areas related to bullying and emotional intelligence, the review begins by defining key terminology, prevention and intervention principles, and highlights the perceptions and misconceptions that exist within the realm of bullying. The discussion continues with the examination of the current state of bullying prevention in elementary school classrooms, as it relates to the environment, student, and teacher. The study then introduces the concept of emotional intelligence and its conflicting views of importance in the classroom. The concepts are then brought together to consider the link between emotional intelligence and bullying. Finally, the literature review concludes with a discussion of teaching emotional intelligence in the classroom through the lens of the physical classroom environment, teacher-student relationship, and the teaching strategies employed.

2.1 Understanding Bullying: Terminology, Principles, and Perceptions & Misconceptions

2.1.1 Bullying Defined

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2012), given in subsection 1(1) of the Education Act: Bullying is defined as aggressive and often repeated behaviours where there is an intent, or reasonable grounds for the pupil to know that the behaviour would likely have one or more of the following effects:

- Cause harm, fear or distress to another individual (includes physical, psychological, social or academic harm, property damage, or harm to an individual's reputation)
- Create a negative environment at school for another individual

It is critical to note that the behaviour can occur in a multitude of different contexts where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, p.4). This imbalance of power can be based on, but not limited to, factors such
as size, strength, age, intelligence, status, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, disability etc. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, p.4). This definition includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, p.4).

The definition of bullying takes many different forms in research literature, and has been long debated as a subset of aggressive behaviour. In order to highlight the differentiators between bullying and aggression, Olweus (2003) identifies that bullying behaviour must include “an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the target, is intentionally harmful, and occurs repetitively” (Espelage, Napolitano & Swearer, 2009, p.2). This concept of an ‘imbalance of power’ is an underlining theme in a majority of bullying definitions, and it has been said that it is not considered bullying if the actual or perceived balance of power is equal amongst both parties (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012; Peterson & Rigby, 1999). An area of disagreement amongst the research is whether to classify bullying as any and all intentional aggressive acts of behaviour, or to specify that the directed behaviour must be carried out repeatedly in order to consider it an act of bullying (Griffin & Gross, 2003). Research has argued that if the definition is too vague, it may lead to over classification and the misclassification of random acts of aggressive behaviour as bullying (Griffin & Gross, 2003). Alternatively, we have to also consider that if the concept of repetitive behaviour is not clearly described, then under-classification of bullying incidents may occur.

There is a clear consensus in the research literature that the definition should emphasize that bullying can take many different forms, both physical and non-physical (psychological) (Griffin & Gross, 2003; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012; Swearer et al., 2009). Physical bullying is characterised by visible hurt such as cuts, bruises, and tangible easily identifiable characteristics. However, psychological bullying can be verbal or non-verbal and is more difficult to detect (Swearer et al., 2009).

Although researchers may have slightly varying definitions of bullying, there are some clearly defined features that many definitions have in common, and are outlined similarly to the Ontario Education Act. Greene (2000, p. 112) suggests that the following are some key features of bullying that a number of researchers have agreed upon and include in their classifications:
1. The bully intends to inflict harm or fear upon the victim.
2. The bullying behaviours occur repeatedly.
3. Bullying can take physical and non-physical forms.
4. There is a real or perceived power imbalance between the bully and the victim.

It is interesting to note that bullying is generally defined through the driving behaviours of the bully, rather than through the perceptions and harm caused to the victim (Griffin & Gross, 2003). It may become a necessary component to develop a more comprehensive definition that includes both the behaviours of the bully, as well as the perceived threats and perceptions of the victim.

2.1.2 Principles of Bullying Prevention & Intervention

It is critical to understand the difference between prevention and intervention and how it pertains to bullying. Prevention is defined as “the act of stopping something from happening or arising” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015). Alternatively, intervention is described as “the act of taking part in something to alter a result, or course of events that is already occurring” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015). Therefore, prevention is the proactive means of reacting to bullying, while intervention describes what to do to offset the impact of bullying once it occurs.

Pepler and Craig (2014) agree that the concept of bullying prevention and intervention is not just focused on eliminating bullying, but takes a wider approach to ensuring that children are able to improve and develop healthy current and future relationships. The focus of bullying prevention, in their view, should emphasize that youth should be educated with the awareness and skills to “initiate and engage positive relationships, prevent students from bullying others, and utilize effective coping mechanisms” (Sect.3, p.1). Simultaneously, when children and youth experience bullying, intervention strategies should focus on “providing individualized support to struggling students (e.g. promote understanding, social skills, attitudes), and ensuring that relationships with teachers, peers, families, and the broader community are positive in the development of constructive social understanding, behaviours, and attitudes” (Pepler & Craig, 2014, Sect. 3, p.1). Overall, they highlight that the driving principles for bullying prevention and intervention are that “bullying is a relationship problem, interventions require a developmental and systems approach, and leadership is the foundation for change” (Sect.3, p.2).

Many successful bullying prevention and intervention programs borrow from Norwegian researcher Dan Olweus (2003), who’s approach focuses on the importance of the context in which
bullying occurs (Feinberg, 2003). The Olweus bullying prevention program builds on four key principles that concentrate on the development of a strong, supportive social culture and environment, as opposed to the foundational principles of social relationships that Pepler and Craig’s research emphasize. Prevention is emphasized through the development of an environment that supports “warm, positive interest, and involvement from adults; firm limits on unacceptable behaviour; consistent application of non-disciplinary, nonphysical sanctions for unacceptable behaviour; and adults who act as authorities and positive role models” (Olweus, 2003, p.3). Similarly, Ontario legislation articulates that effective prevention programming comes from a strong environmental foundation and aligned school-wide policies (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, p.3).

Every school board in Ontario is mandated to establish a bullying prevention and intervention plan for their related schools, and each school is required to implement the board’s plan in accordance with the safe and inclusive learning environment regulations (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). When establishing a plan, boards must take into consideration all applicable parties and their views, including those of the students, teachers, principals, and community (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). According to the recent amendments to the Ontario Education Act (2012), intervention plans highlight that principals must suspend students for bullying, and students are to be further considered for expulsion if (1) “the student has previously been suspended for bullying, and (2) the student’s continuing presence in the school creates, in the principal’s opinion, an unacceptable risk to the safety of another person” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, p.2). Nevertheless, according to Swearer (2009), even with the board policies in place, many school districts will not prioritize the creation, adoption, or enforcement of anti-bullying policies being endorsed by the ministry. The impact that these policies have on actually preventing bullying becomes highly dependent on the board, school, and individual classroom teachers to implement and carry forward meaningful and effective strategies of prevention and intervention (Swearer, 2009).

Regardless of the policies or focus on prevention strategies, bullying prevention must begin early in a child’s education (Cherry, 2014; Pepler & Craig, 2014). Intervening right away allows teachers and parents the opportunity to assist children in the development of social and emotional skills that act as a foundation for healthy social relationships (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). The act of intervening in a situation right away is no doubt an important means
of reacting and hopefully alleviating a potentially negative situation. However, the above research lends to the idea that more emphasis should be placed on developing preventative measures that promote the development of social and emotional characteristics, in a structured environment that encourages effective means of dealing with difficult situations.

2.1.3 Bullying Perceptions & Misconceptions

‘We do not have bullying in our school’ – bullying happens in every school, good schools are proactive in their approach and deal with incidents of bullying promptly, firmly, and fairly. Bad schools deny it, ignore it, justify it, rationalize it, handle it inappropriately, sweep in under the carpet and blame the victim or parents. Bullying occurs in all schools and to a greater degree than most people realize. Acknowledging that it occurs is the first step towards preventing it. (Bullying Online.org, 2013)

Teachers are assumed to know how to handle bullying situations because it is said to be a part of their job. However, the truth is, that often times teachers are unaware of how to appropriately deal with situations that occur in their classrooms or out in the schoolyard, and are further disconnected by the many other aspects of their job (Sullivan, 2011). The fact of the matter is that teachers are unable to be everywhere at all times, and to further aggravate the situation, bullying is generally done inconspicuously (Sullivan, 2011). Therefore, teachers tend to underestimate the amount of bullying that occurs in their schools and classrooms (Lazarus & Pföhl, 2010). Further research suggests that teachers are reluctant to intervene in bullying, and students have reported that teachers are often ineffective in preventing and intervening with situations (Lazarus & Pföhl, 2010; Marshall et al, 2009; Olweus, 1993). It is the job of the teacher to do everything possible to ensure that each student is provided with a safe learning environment conducive to the student’s education and success. Bullying can produce long-term consequences such as emotional disorders, depression, and planned or contemplated suicide for both the bully and the victim (Gardner, 2013), hence it is critical for teachers to identify and effectively address bullying behaviours (Lazarus & Pföhl, 2010). Prevention research supports, that this is not enough; it is not enough for teachers to just address bullying behaviours as they occur, more has to be done in our classrooms and in our curriculums, to support and develop the whole child, which spans into the development of social-emotional skills (Bully Online.org, 2013; Lazarus & Pföhl, 2010).

Another common misconception related to bullying is that bullies are perceived to be unintelligent, larger kids that come from dysfunctional families, while victims are nerdy academic
kids with glasses (Swearer et al., 2009). But as experience has showcased, this is a tremendous misconception, as bullies come in all shapes and sizes. As Swearer (2009) suggests, bullies can be star athletes, popular kids, or the teacher’s pet, there is no defining or all encompassing trait. Further contrary to this myth, it is suggested that many bullies possess tremendously skilful social skills and can be academically bright (Swearer et al., 2009).

Results from a study concluded that 86.3% of teachers faced with bullying situations were said to talk with both the bully and the victim after the situation occurred, and therefore perpetuating the discipline of bullying as a reactive task (Lazurus & Pföhl, 2010). However, less than one-third (31.7%) of teachers actually created and implemented rules to prevent bullying, and even less set aside classroom time to discuss bullying (Lazurus & Pföhl, 2010). Lazurus & Pföhl (2010) also concluded, that a vast amount of teachers do not actually foresee any barriers for implementing social-emotional learning into their classrooms and discussing bullying more openly as a part of their activities. Nevertheless, some findings suggest that teachers perceive post-bullying activities as the most effective way to reduce bullying, only then followed by enhancing the environmental factors through bullying prevention activities (Lazurus & Pföhl, 2010). Many researchers agree, that professional and continuing education is required for teachers to improve their knowledge about managing bullying and building a classroom that promotes emotional well-being and prevents bullying (Lazurus & Pföhl, 2010; Swearer et al., 2009).

2.2 Current State of Bullying & Prevention in Elementary School Classrooms

In order to move towards effective bullying prevention, we have to become aware of what is going on within the four walls of the classroom environment, and what the challenges are that students and teachers are facing when dealing with bullying prevention.

2.2.1 The Environment

The structure of the classroom, and the context in which bullying unfolds, plays a critical part when examining the role of ecological factors that effect bullying interactions in the classroom (Feinberg, 2003). According to researchers Friedrich-Cofer, Housten-Stein & Susman (1977), the structure of a classroom greatly influences the behaviours of children. The lack of structured daily programming and less student and teacher interaction lends itself to producing more aggressive students (Housten-Stein et al, 1977). Research has shown a majority of classroom bullying is observed during independent forms of classroom activities, and when the teacher is not
frequently circling the classroom (Atlas & Pepler 2010). However, in some instances, individual student characteristics overpower the classroom context, and some students still engage in aggressive and disruptive behaviours even when being directly supervised (Coie & Dodge, 1988). The classroom environment and culture are crucial components when considering active bullying prevention, and should play a prevalent role in developing the requirements of bullying prevention plans.

2.2.2 The Student

Extensive research has been done on the physical and mental characteristics of children who bully, and more recent findings go against the historical notion that boys are more likely to bully than girls (Olweus, 1993). In a 2010 study conducted by Rona Atlas and Debra Pepler, their research observed bullying behaviours in a public school in the metropolitan area of Toronto. The findings suggested that boys and girls were equally likely to bully within a classroom setting (Atlas & Pepler, 2010). This finding was very similar to another observational study of bullying on the playground, where no gender differences were observed amongst those who bullied (Craig, 2001). Contrary to this notion, in a Toronto Board of Education survey, it was found that 23% of male students admitted that they had bullied other students more than once or twice per semester, whereas only 8% of female students acknowledged their bullying behaviours (Ziegler & Pepler, 1993). This could be due to the inability of the female students to admit that they have in fact bullied, or alternatively they may not be aware that their actions would be considered bullying, as they may differ from more overt aggressive bullying behaviours (Atlas & Pepler, 2010).

It has been said that aggressive children are more likely to become off-task and engage in bullying behaviours, they may not possess the attention skills to independently learn, and require considerably more teacher support to stay on task (Roberts, Pepler, & Craig, 1998). This notion is further supported, as Olweus (1978) also describes bullies to have aggressive character traits and show patterns of aggressive responses. Bullies are generally characterized as students who are not developing adequate academic or social-emotional skills, and fall into a disruptive cycle, which can contribute to academic failure (Paterson, 1986). Similarly, bullies may also be at risk of maladjustment and criminal behaviour if the aggression persists (Olweus, 1991). The victim also experiences apparent characteristics that are generally related to feelings of anxiousness and fear, and it too can affect their academic performance (Atlas & Pepler 2010). Teachers and schools can use various means to identify students who may need additional support to develop their
education and social emotional progression; this can be detected through specially designed questionnaires or through observation (Atlas & Pepler 2010).

2.2.3 The Teacher

Teachers can play an incredibly vital role in bullying prevention and intervention within the classroom. Researcher Kathleen Allen (2010) states that teachers often learn about bullying through informal mechanisms that occur throughout their own life experiences, attending workshops or presentations, and through seeking out their own resources to deal with current issues in their classrooms. Within a more formal capacity, some schools and boards provide bullying prevention workshops and training aimed at helping teachers understand the problem of violence and bullying, and learning how to respond and modify these interactions with their students (Allen, 2010). Most school programs focus on policy development and the development of classroom conduct, however, lack focus on a teachers’ classroom management practices and the importance of teaching social skills to assist in reducing interpersonal conflict (Allen, 2010). Research conducted by Lazurus & Pfohl (2010) support the notion that two of the most important considerations for a teacher is to establish clear codes of conduct within the classroom, as well as to assist students in building positive relationships, by encouraging respect and building a sense of community.

The difficulty with bullying is that sometimes it becomes challenging for teachers to notice the occurrence of bullying within and outside the classroom, as students tend to be rather covert when they know a teacher is present (Sullivan, 2011). As complex as this issue may be, it becomes the teacher’s responsibility to develop an awareness that assists them in identifying bullying behaviours in their classrooms (Atlas & Pepler 2010). In the study conducted by Atlas & Pepler (2010) they emphasized the importance of the teacher role in assisting both the bully and the victim, as they recognize that the bully and the victim are unable to solve conflicts on their own. Olweus (1993) also suggests that children have trouble defending themselves, and require adults to intervene, which internally shifts the power away from the bully. The more vigilant and responsive a teacher becomes, the more likely students seek out a teachers’ assistance in a time of need (Atlas & Pepler 2010). Conversely, classroom observations show teachers not consistently intervening in bullying situations, which may suggest that teachers are not aware of the covert occurrences (Sullivan, 2011). Toronto survey data results are in staggering support of this discrepancy, and show that only “7% of teachers and 25% of students indicate that teachers
almost always intervene to stop bullying” (Ziegler & Pepler, 1993). The challenges of detecting bullying are apparent, but research suggests building awareness is the first step for teachers to increase the likelihood of intervening in bullying interactions (Atlas & Pepler 2010; Sullivan, 2011). However, this is only one small piece of the solution to reducing bullying behaviors (Atlas & Pepler 2010).

On a daily basis teachers face huge challenges in the classroom, and the complexity of bullying adds another layer of difficulty and leaves teachers in a vulnerable position (Atlas & Pepler 2010). The covert and brief nature of bullying makes it significantly more challenging for teachers to detect inappropriate actions (Atlas & Pepler 2010). It becomes essential to teach other students the importance of standing up for one another, and bringing the teacher into the conversation when necessary. Therefore, it becomes fundamental to find the root causes of bullying, and assist children in developing the necessary life skills and emotional intelligence necessary to prevent these behaviors from occurring in the first place.

2.3 Views of Emotional Intelligence and Its Importance in the Classroom

The elements of emotional intelligence—being aware of our feelings and handling disruptive emotions well, empathizing with how others feel, and being skillful in handling our relationships—are crucial abilities for effective living. We should be teaching the basics of emotional intelligence in schools. (Goleman, 2001, p.90)

The term ‘emotional intelligence’ was coined to describe ones ability to “identify, control, and evaluate ones emotions, and those of others” (Akers & Porter, 2007). Often the behaviours of emotional intelligence are broken down into five defining characteristics: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills (Akers & Porter, 2007). Similarly, other definitions of emotional intelligence recognize the meaning of emotions on relationships, and its capacity to assist in “perceiving emotions, understanding emotion-related feelings, and recognizing the information of these emotions, while also managing them” (Caruso, Mayer & Salovey, 1999, p.267). Bill Thompson, a University of Toronto professor states, “emotional intelligence is grossly underestimated in our own school systems” (Daily Post, Feb 16 2012). Like much of Thompson’s research, Goleman (2001) states that emotional intelligence is something that can be learned, just like any other subject. Contrary to this belief, some researchers do not believe that emotional intelligence characteristics can be learned or strengthened, and instead claim that it is an inborn trait natural to born leaders (Daily Post, Feb 16 2012).
In recent years, the term emotional intelligence has received a lot of attention in the education world, and researchers have studied its role in the development of student success and emotional adjustment. However, the study of emotional intelligence is not without controversy, as it challenges the role of the traditional rationalist approaches to education (Humphrey, 2007; McPhail, 2004). Historically, the more traditional approach to education emphasizes the significance of teaching the core curriculum subjects to prepare students to meet the challenges of everyday life that adheres to the qualities of intelligence, structure, logic, and testability (Humphrey, 2007). Arguably, the term ‘emotional intelligence’ combines emotion and reason, which to some are seen as two conflicting viewpoints and can be viewed as an oxymoron (Humphrey, 2007; Salovey & Mayer, 2004). Further supporting this notion, some associate emotion with the production of irrational decisions, which lend to the perception that emotion is inferior to cognitive decision-making and should not hold a place in professional and educational fields (McPhail, 2004).

It has been said that “one of the most limiting things is that we do not talk openly about our struggles or emotions; we keep them to ourselves because it is seen as a sign of weakness” (Zarzour, 2009). Contrary to this rationalist approach to education, Romasz, Kantor, & Elias (2004), are a few of many authors who suggest that emotional intelligence skills are a necessary prerequisite for education, and are required attributes essential to one’s future (Goleman, 2001; Romasz, et al., 2004). Much of the current research supports this notion, and goes further in saying that these attributes are more important than ever, given the current demands of society, which require individuals to have heightening emotional awareness, problem solving and decision making, social interaction, and conflict management skills (Romasz et al., 2004). Individuals who are highly empathetic are more likely to be able to anticipate the negative emotions that could be produced by their own conduct towards another person, and therefore, are able to self-regulate and prevent their own behaviours (Gini et al, 2007). It is evident that there is an abundance of research to support the notion that success and well-being are contingent on one's ability to learn and employ appropriate social and emotional competences (Adler & Cherniss, 2000; Darling-Hammond et al, 2005; Goleman, 2001; Romasz, et al., 2004).

Emotional intelligence has been seen as the missing piece to education, and represents the importance of emotional literacy and competence as a skill set vital to the basic quality of life, in school, within a community and workplace, with family, and to support the development of
relationships (Goleman, 2001). As experience and the media have denoted, there is an unfortunate danger to each of us, at a local and global scale, that presents frightening issues if children grow up with knowledge, but lack a moral compass required to appropriately utilize their knowledge in meaningful ways (Gardner, 2013; Lau, 2012). As such, many researchers agree that there is a tremendous necessity in education to teach students a combination of academic and emotional intelligence skills required to equip them to be effective citizens of the world (Cherry, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al, 2005; Goleman, 2001; Romasz, et al., 2004).

### 2.4 An Issue of Emotional Intelligence: The Link Between Emotional Intelligence & Bullying

The concept of teaching and developing the whole child has been one that truly embraces the importance of developing all aspects of a child – the academic, social, and emotional sides, which emphasizes the importance of teaching students to respect others (Massari, 2011). The significance of developing and showing respect for one another has been left behind in the educational race to the top. But as concern around bullying has developed, research suggests that getting back to the ‘golden rule’ through the use of social and emotional learning strategies may be a worthwhile investment in promoting an academically solid, bully-free learning environment (Massari, 2011). An abundance of research supports the idea that there is a strong correlation between emotional responses and the link to proactive aggression (Cowie & Berdondini, 2002). Cognitive neuroscience research also argues that emotions are significant contributors to the generation of our actions, as well as its execution and control (Zhu & Thagard, 2002). Thus, in its simplest form, if emotion impacts action, the opportunity becomes learning how to teach, modify, and control those emotions to prevent bullying behaviours (Cowie & Berdondini, 2002; Zhu & Thagard, 2002).

Individuals who have well developed emotional intelligence are characterized by awareness of their own emotions and those of others’, and have the ability to manage, express, and regulate their emotions effectively (Lomas et al., 2012). Unpleasant situations will be unavoidable throughout life; therefore there becomes a great necessity to ensure that children develop the ability to deal with difficult situations in a socially acceptable way (Sullivan, 2011). The ‘feelings response’ is a philosophy that argues that instead of providing bullies with various consequences, teachers and staff should spend the time trying to better the nature of the bully and alter their bullying system (Sullivan, 2011). This approach concentrates not only on stopping the
bully, but focuses on rehumanizing the situation by aiming to change the behaviours of the perpetrator (Sullivan, 2011). Change is said to happen, not because of the fear of punishment, but by empathizing with the victim, the bully gains a sense of remorse and realization, which assists in restoring a sense of humanity back into the relationship (Sullivan, 2011).

Research often forgets the benefits of enhancing social emotional intelligence from the victim’s perspective (Griffin & Gross, 2003). By gaining the right tools to deal with and understand their emotions and those of others, it empowers the victim to effectively change the situation and therefore enables emotional and self-awareness in the face of disturbing experiences (Cowie et al., 2002). Lomas et al. (2012) argues that if we develop ways to teach and foster emotional intelligence in children, then it may be feasible to create anti-bullying programs that focus on this development. Many researchers agree that emotional intelligence has a strong correlation with the reduction of bullying behaviours in schools, and furthermore, it also prepares children with the necessary components to be successful in each aspect of life (Berdondini & Cowie, 2002; Lomas et al., 2012; Sullivan, 2011).

Empathetic behaviour has received a lot of attention in the research world, as a means of understanding and preventing bullying conduct. Cohen and Strayer (1996) found that bullies were less able to recognize other people’s emotions and were generally unable to articulate their own emotions. Arguably, Hoffman (2000) explores that children may have high abilities to detect someone else’s perspective, but may have no willingness or ability to actually share those feelings (Swearer et al., 2009). Therefore, there needs to be an understanding that emotional intelligence is like a spectrum, and just because someone may have aspects of emotional intelligence, does not mean that it is always used in the most appropriate manner (Hoffman, 2000). Generally, a wide variety of research supports that empathetic responsiveness drives individuals to modify their aggressive tendencies, as people with high empathy are able to anticipate the negative outcomes of their own conduct towards another individual (Albiero, Benelli Gianmarco & Gini, 2006; Hoffman, 2000). Cognitive research suggests that “the more a person is able to appreciate other people’s perspectives, the more he or she can understand and tolerate the position of others, thus making the adoption of aggressive behaviour less likely” (Gini et al, 2006, p.468).

Prevention and intervention is not about any specific program, it is about changing the dynamics of the social relationships so that they change from dysfunctional to healthy (Swearer et al., 2009). From a cognitive framework, Swearer (2009) claims that aggressive children lack an
understanding of others’ mental states, they are said to have poor self-control and judgement, which results in their impulsive and sometimes aggressive conduct. She suggests that in that statement lies the need to understand the connection of bullying to our mental states, and thus our emotional intelligence (Swearer et al., 2009). It becomes necessary for teachers and parents to develop ways to shift this attitude and apathy that is emerging in our children, and focus on the development of social emotional intelligence (Massari, 2011). Educators cannot ignore the mounting evidence that “social and emotional learning strategies are crucial to promoting academic achievement, safety, and bully-free schools” (Massari, 2011). By teaching and discussing the elements of feelings and emotions, helping students work through scenarios in the classroom, arming them with the tools necessary to effectively work through situations, and by providing opportunities to utilize their emotional intelligence skills, teachers can significantly impact a child’s emotional well-being and in turn their learning (Massari, 2011; Swearer et al., 2009).

2.5 Teaching Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom

Researchers and educators are beginning to recognize that bullying prevention requires a focus on intrinsic change, where students develop the skills that lend to an innate preference to engage in peaceful interactions, and where students themselves find bullying unacceptable (Massari, 2011). In order to move towards this change, there needs to be a thorough understanding of how to teach emotional intelligence in the classroom, and what are the supporting elements required to successfully integrate the necessary strategies. In his book “Teaching with Emotional Intelligence” Alan Mortiboys (2012) explains that the emotional environment is shaped by a variety of factors including: the physical environment, the community built by teachers and students, and the materials and activities employed.

2.5.1 The Physical Classroom Environment

The physical environment of the classroom should allow students for active movement, a safe and inviting space, and one that is physically comfortable. In order to create this environment, teachers should consider the following factors within their reach: desk spacing and groupings, areas where children can go to relax or take a break, adequate lighting and heating, the content of the rooms and walls, and the space available for movement (Mortiboys, 2012). The
physical atmosphere alone is not enough to encourage emotional intelligence, however, acts as a basis for a strong learning environment (Mortiboys, 2012).

### 2.5.2 Building Community: Teacher-Student Relationship

At the foundation of all learning is a strong, stable, safe, and supportive classroom environment that is conducive to acquiring new knowledge and skills (Mortiboys, 2012). It is the classroom teacher that plays a predominate role in the creation and cultivation of a safe environment that supports effective problem solving, growth, creative expression, and cooperative learning that promotes emotional intelligence (Mortiboys, 2012). Eric Jensen (1998) claims that the state in which you are is one of the most important factors when considering an individual's readiness to learn. He claims that, “all learning is state dependent” and one’s state is characterized by the collection of emotions and feelings (Jensen, 1998). The major contributor to the learning state is the emotional environment that he or she is a part of, thus the overall community, experience, and feelings of being in the classroom (Mortiboys, 2012).

The development of the classroom culture starts from the very first day of school. In order to build healthy teacher-student relationships and create a supportive culture, teachers must ensure the affirmation of student accomplishments, encourage self-confidence, provide safe opportunities to take risks without penalty, and deliver thoughtful feedback (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Baker (2006) supports that the key to creating an emotionally safe environment is embodied by a teacher-student relationship that is supported by mutual trust and respect. Students should feel heard and safe in their environments, and feel as though the teacher will protect their integrity, and right to learn without fear of humiliation (Baker, 2006). Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) also agrees that the key is to encourage risk-taking within students and assist in developing their self-confidence in a safe place where they feel comfortable taking chances and making mistakes. By providing ample safe learning opportunities and guaranteeing that problems are dealt with in a fair and timely manner students begin to feel safe rather than threatened in their environments (Baker, 2006; Darling-Hammond et al, 2009).

Once the teacher is able to build a comfortable and inviting physical environment, a safe community based on a strong and trusting teacher-student relationships, and a classroom culture supported by enthusiasm and a motivation to learn, the next task is to build peer relationships. These relationships are characterized by cooperative and emotional learning; through activities
that support opportunities to challenge students, encourage curiosity, and allow for resourcefulness and adventure.

2.5.3 Teaching Strategies & Activities

In order to manage a classroom with the goal of reducing bullying, this involves a teacher’s style and philosophy of teaching, which is viewed through the strategies and activities employed, the teacher as a role model, and the creation and encouragement of activities that support and build healthy and cooperative learning practices (Goleman, 1995). Goleman (1995) outlines that through a mixture of modelling, direct instruction, and coaching, teachers can help students to learn how to monitor their feelings, manage their emotions, channel their motivation, and empathize and relate to others.

Sullivan (2011) states that building a cooperative learning environment that supports emotional intelligence requires five major defining characteristics that must be instilled by the classroom teacher: positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, face-to-face interaction, and teaching students interpersonal skills. By creating activities that encourage students to work together and solve conflicts, while depending on one another, allow the opportunity for children to learn the skills that lend to their emotional intelligence (Atlas & Pepler 2010). Effective anti-bullying activities should be structured around a combination of cognitive and affective curriculum, as stated by Goleman (1995). Goleman (1995) supports the idea that teachers should help students build empathy by providing opportunities through individual lessons to put themselves in one another’s shoes, and try to develop an understanding of different perspectives. It is through a teachers activities and modelling, that students are given the opportunity to work in group situations where they can learn and test these skills (Atlas & Pepler 2010).

In order for teachers to utilize cooperative learning strategies within the classroom, they must encourage a group culture that allows for positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, face to face interactions, and exercises that allow for the ability to learn and utilize interpersonal skills through conflict resolution, leadership involvement, decision making, and trust activities (Sullivan, 2011). Slavin (1995) establishes that cooperative learning must be well planned, deliberate, and rigorous in its approach, in order for it to be meaningful in increasing the self-esteem and feelings of students. Once developed and integrated into a classroom structure,
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this becomes an asset in dealing with conflicts that may otherwise result in bullying (Slavin, 1995).

There are multitudes of overarching strategies that can be employed while trying to create activities that support an anti-bullying curriculum. Literature and storytelling is an effective means of introducing the issue of bullying to students, and can be used as a launching pad for discussion, perspective taking, and problem solving (Swearer, 2009). Research suggests that artistic activities such as drama and role-play can be introduced to assist students in developing emotional language, raising empathy, and increasing a child’s perspectives in differentiated situations (Pepler, Craig, & Ziegler, 1993). Similarly, Sullivan (2011) also agrees that arts and performance can be a beneficial means of allowing children to be taught the difference between right and wrong, and work through difficult situations, while developing appropriate vocabulary. In correlation, Goleman (1995) suggests utilizing frustrating or difficult classroom or individual situations to foster empathy and discuss similar experiences and outcomes. By introducing real world examples and case studies into classrooms, this allows the opportunity to foster discussion around “how would you feel in this situation”, which intern assists students in developing and articulating feelings and exploring empathy related skills (Ellison, 2001). Similarly, Sullivan (2011) supports the use of ‘I statements’ as a mechanism used in sensitive situations, which allows students to engage in using emotional vocabulary. For younger age groups, circle time can be an important mechanism in developing community, and encouraging discussion that promotes diversity, and positive sense of self (Ellison, 2001). Sullivan (2011) further states that circle time allows the opportunity to discuss difficult situations as a class, given that students feel comfortable with one another and the culture is based on a strong community. Alternatively, Ronald Mah (2009) suggests that a strategy that should be utilized when planning lessons is to “stress them, frustrate them, make them fail, and let them suffer (SFFS)”. He advises that by creating these mock scenarios, students get to practice their emotional intelligence skills in a safe space, while supported by peers and teachers (Mah, 2009). Although Mah’s approach seems somewhat harsh, there are a lot of parallels in the above research, as it relates to the creation of mock scenarios through drama and story telling. The promotion of meaningful and consistent reflective practices can also play a significant role in fostering emotional intelligence (Ellison, 2001; Sullivan, 2011). Through the articulation of goals, creation of portfolios, and submission of
journal entries, reflection acts as a necessary component for children to truly develop a deep and thoughtful understanding of their feelings (Ellison, 2001; Sullivan, 2011).

Education is no doubt changing, and social emotional learning is becoming the new standard for teaching children the basics of life (Elias & Arnold, 2006). Therefore, educators need to lead the way in preparing students for the tests of life, through a systematic development of a core set of skills that aid children in navigating through life’s moral challenges and decisions (Elias & Arnold, 2006; Swearer, 2009). The strategies developed for reducing bullying in the classroom do not have to be expensive or complicated; they just need to be consistent and meaningful (Swearer, 2009).

2.6 Conclusion: Brief Overview & Preview of What is Next

As evidenced throughout this literature review, bullying is a rather complex issue that adds another level of complexity and burden for teachers to detect and manage (Sullivan, 2011). As demonstrated, bullying often takes on a varied definition, based on the individual, and there are a variety of perceptions and misconceptions related to the topic of bullying (Griffin & Gross, 2003; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012; Swearer et al., 2009). As discussed, policy and procedures within Ontario legislation has provided a vast array of prevention and intervention principles for schools and teachers to follow, yet the current state of bullying prevention is still challenged by the environment, student, and teachers within the class (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). The research paints an optimistic view that supports the importance of teaching emotional intelligence in the classroom (Massari, 2011; Mortiboys 2012), and I believe that this provides a stepping-stone as a preventative means of combating classroom bullying. Bullying is a rather expansive and highly researched topic, however, my study deals specifically with the investigation of the link between emotional intelligence and bullying, and how teachers are implementing emotional intelligence in practice as a means of combating bullying. The following chapter provides the details of the overall methodology and design used to dictate the qualitative research that takes place in the form of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This includes the specific procedures, instruments, participants, data analytical techniques, and will address the ethical components and limitations within the study.
Chapter #3: Research Methodology

3.0 Chapter Overview

The following chapter provides a detailed overview of the design and procedures utilized to conduct this research study in accordance with the parameters outlined by the University of Toronto. This includes the approach and procedures employed to design this research study. The methodology section will address the instruments utilized to collect and analyze the data, as well as provide a detailed framework of participant information, including sampling criteria, procedures, participant background, and interview questions. This section will conclude with an ethical review discussion, along with the strengths and limitations of the methodological practices employed.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

The study, “Combating Bullying: Educating the Heart Through Emotional Intelligence”, was conducted using a qualitative research approach involving a literature review and three semi-structured face-to-face interviews with teachers.

Given the explorative nature of the problem that this research is trying to address, a qualitative study is one that better fits the need to seek individual voices, allow for a flexible style of writing, and address the various contexts and settings of participants, rather than more rigid predetermined quantitative studies (Creswell, 2013). In order to understand what elementary school teachers are doing to cultivate emotional intelligence, a qualitative approach provides information through real-world examples, while also factoring in the framework and settings in which the behaviours take place (Colin, 2010). In addition to the initial literature review conducted on emotional intelligence and bullying behaviours, ongoing and pertinent research was reviewed to enhance the relevance and accuracy of this study. This was important to uncover new and enlightened aspects of the research disclosed through the interview process, and allow for continuity throughout each aspect of the research.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

This study used semi-structured face-to-face interviews with three elementary school teachers and educators working to develop and foster emotional intelligence in their classrooms.
This semi-structured interview protocol is the primary instrument used for data collection, based on the required research parameters (see Appendix B).

Qualitative research conducted through semi-structured interviews offered a valuable means of collecting and comparing reliable data, while having the opportunity to set up clear interview questions and guidelines that attend to the research focus and questions, prior to collection (Merriam, 2009). The semi-structured interview approach allowed the interviewees the freedom to express personal thoughts, viewpoints, and lived experiences. This permitted individuals to share their stories and provided a means of gathering information to develop theories that would have not been adequately captured through quantitative methods (Creswell, 2013). The less formal nature of qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in conversation, as participants may have focused on or reorganized questions in a way that was not initially considered by the interviewer (Creswell, 2013).

The interviews were conducted to further investigate what a sample of elementary school teachers were doing to cultivate a classroom environment that prioritized emotional intelligence, and to hear their perspectives on the impact that these practices may have had on bullying behaviours. The collection of the research conducted within the literature review, along with the face-to-face interviews, delivered a thorough analysis that reflected the underlying research purpose and assisted in answering the major research questions.

3.3 Participants

This section addresses the methodological decision-making as it pertains to the research participants. This includes the sampling criteria established for participant recruitment, the sampling procedures taken to locate participants, as well as a brief bio to introduce each of the participants selected.

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

In order to help answer what a sample of teachers were doing to cultivate a classroom environment that prioritized emotional intelligence, and the observable impacts on bullying behaviours, a sample of three teachers were interviewed. The research participants needed to have a minimum of 5 years teaching experience within an elementary school environment or classroom. This was to ensure, that educators selected had a number of years of experience working to develop, explore, and test various strategies that promote emotional intelligence. By
interviewing more experienced teachers, this allowed for the ability to dig deeper into a participant’s reasoning behind employing specific strategies. Secondly, participants were required to be cognisant of bullying problems that appeared within their classroom or wider school atmosphere, and had made a conscious attempt to utilize strategies that minimized bullying behaviours. It was not necessary that these strategies were fully integrated into the classroom structure; however, teachers must have made some strategic effort to minimize these behaviours. Since the study was looking to understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying behaviours, it was essential for participants to recognize that bullying was apparent in their classroom and teachers were actively addressing it in some form. Lastly, participants must have demonstrated the need for emotional intelligence strategies as a priority within their classrooms, while actively integrating these approaches as a means of cultivating these characteristics. Given the purpose of this study, in order to determine actionable strategies and best practices that foster emotional intelligence, I looked to educators who had experience and expertise in the area of emotional intelligence, and had made a concerted effort in building a classroom foundation that cultivated emotional intelligence.

In summary, the research participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- Teachers or educators who had a minimum of 5 years experience working within an elementary school environment and/or classroom.
- Teachers or educators that demonstrated a commitment to anti-bullying education in the classroom and who were actively using various strategies in an attempt to minimize bullying behaviours (E.g. Roots of Empathy).
- Teachers or educators who had demonstrated expertise in the integration of strategic instructional strategies that were used to cultivate emotional intelligence within the school and/or classroom (E.g. TRIBES philosophy).

3.3.2 Sampling Procedures

Based on the small-scale and limited nature of this study, the selection of participants relied primarily on convenience sampling, yet had some elements of purposeful sampling, as participants were not selected at random (Creswell, 2013; Flick, 2009). Participants fit the sampling criteria above, however, as teacher candidates, the recruitment procedure predominantly utilized a community of mentors, teacher colleagues, and existing peer networks. I reached out to Principals, Vice Principals, and teachers that I had previously worked with, as well as coordinators of various educational and board institutions such as the Caring and Safe Schools Office, school administrators who had implemented Roots of Empathy, and instructors who had
been Tribes trained. The qualitative research literature does suggest that there can be drawbacks to convenience sampling when recruiting interviewees (Flick, 2009; Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) explained that often the easier the access, the more complicated and less effective the interview, as participants may be more or less inclined to share details of their experiences based on a prior relationship with you or someone that you know, leaving the study with perhaps incomplete or distorted information. To minimize these drawbacks as much as possible, participants selected were not direct friends or supervisors.

Through the use of my own professional networks, as well as those of friends and colleagues, I sent out an email with brief details summarizing the research study and participant criteria. Recipients were urged to distribute this information to colleagues, peers, and their personal networks in an attempt to recruit the best individuals to support the purpose of this study. Seidman (2013) alludes to the utmost importance of developing a professional and respectful relationship during each and every point of contact with potential participants. In order to be as professional as possible and to avoid ethical issues, I requested that my connections directly pass on the email to potential contributors within their own personal networks, so that interested parties had the opportunity to reach out directly if they were willing to assist. This also helped to ensure that participants were volunteering to participate and did not feel pressured or obligated to assist. Interested participants were asked to rate the contribution of their work against the sampling criteria (i.e. based on a scale of 1-10). Candidates were then selected based on qualifications and willingness to contribute.

3.3.3 Participant Bios

Below are background details about each of the participants who contributed to this research. Pseudonyms were assigned to each of the candidates, to ensure privacy. The snapshot provides key details about grade levels, schools, and types of classrooms previously taught in, and overall experience with the topics of discussion, at the time of the study.

**Nina:** At the time of the interview, Nina had worked as a teacher in the York Region District School Board for 5 years. She had operated in a variety of LTO and full-time positions in grades 1/2, 3/4, 5/6, and French Rotary. The schools she had taught in full-time were in neighbourhoods with relatively high socioeconomic statuses, and with families who were assumed to be fairly well off. Her overall goal as a teacher was to provide students with a safe place where they could feel welcome and happy, and to develop the courage and confidence to advocate for
themselves. A frightening bullying situation took place with one of her students, which sparked her interest in bullying prevention and the teachings of emotional intelligence.

**Luke:** At the time of the interview, Luke had been employed as a teacher for 5 years within the York Region District School Board. He also taught for 1 year in New York State at a small private Christian school. When I met him he was teaching grade 7, and had previous experience with kindergarten, grades 3/4, 4/5, 5/6, and the pride enrichment program (for mainstream gifted students). At the time, he was working in a relatively affluent neighbourhood with a diverse group of students. His major goal as a classroom teacher was to impart character development in the students that he worked with. His own faith was described to be a key contributor to his personal focus on developing students with strong morals, positive character traits, and inspiring progressive decision making strategies.

**Ava:** Ava had worked as a Child and Youth Worker since the age of 25. At the time of the interview she was employed with York Region District School Board, within a diverse community, with a high number of English Language Learners. She worked with students across grades, from kindergarten to grade 8, depending on student and school needs. She had previously worked in kindergarten intervention classes to assist with home-to-school transitions. She had also assisted in grade 1-3 classrooms with a focus on teaching students how to learn, problem solve, and work with each other. At the time of the interview, Ava conducted day treatments and intervention programs within the overall school setting. Programs were introduced based on a variety of school, socioeconomic and individual student needs, and issues that related to social-emotional or academic problems in school or at home. In her own experience as a student, Ava saw a lack of importance placed on the nurturing of the skills that lend itself to emotional intelligence. It was her childhood experiences that led her to become a Child and Youth Worker within the education system. Her overall goal as an educator is to empower the students that she works with to develop their own personal voices.

**3.4 Data Analysis**

Data was collected in the form of computer notes during the interview. A computer was used to record proceedings to allow for speed and accuracy during communications. An audio recorder was also used to record the interview questions and responses. The audio recorder was used to provide an additional means of accurate data collection.
The data analysis process began soon after the data was collected from each interview. The process started with the organization of data into computer files that were legible and accurate. Recordings were converted onto the computer, and then transcribed. Seidman (2013) explained that transcribing without paraphrasing is key to accurate and full transcriptions. He admitted that inevitably the researcher’s consciousness will play a role in interpretations, however it is still essential to record as completely and as precisely as possible to minimize biases. Creswell (2013) suggested that once the data is organized and transcriptions and interview notes are compiled, it is important for the researcher to read the data in its entirety several times before moving forward. This allows for a thorough understanding of the details, and a sense of the interview as a whole, before it is broken down into a variety of themes (Creswell, 2013). As the reading progressed, I began to make margin notes to highlight key concepts, and reoccurring themes. Using the research questions as a guide for interpretation, each of the transcripts was coded in detail to highlight divergences, common categories of data, and the themes within categories. Creswell (2013) suggested using ‘lean coding’ to minimize the amount of codes used to categorize the information, as it was a more manageable way to create codes. Once codes and themes were created across all transcriptions, they were compared across interviews, and integrated together where appropriate. This process of analyzing data by taking a wider approach rather than making specific observations was important, in order to reduce generalizations that may be unconsciously made to suit the research context and purpose (Seidman, 2013). Once each interview was coded and themes were compared across transcriptions, the creation of overall categories and themes were developed to encompass the totality of all interviews. Chapter 4 will utilize this coding process to discuss the interpretation of the data, to provide the reader with meaning, in correspondence with the literature review. This will also highlight the details that participants did not speak to (null data), as pertaining to the research questions and purpose. Null data can be just as important to providing meaning in the interpretation stage of the process, as it can hold problems and gaps that may exist.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

Several procedures were applied to ensure confidentiality and consent as it related to participation in this research study. To minimize the risk for participants prior to the face-to-face interviews, initial contact disclosed the purpose of the study and the need for semi-structured
interviews (Creswell, 2013). The interview protocol was designed by making reflective choices to ensure sensitivity of various issues that may cause emotional responses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). All participants were asked to sign a letter of consent (Appendix A). This included details about the research being conducted, the purpose of the study, the affiliated school and program, the research supervisor information, the participant expectations, as well as details describing how the findings will be utilized. The consent notice also included various other details describing the right to withdraw, risks of participation, and data storage information. The letter was signed prior to the start of each interview and each party was given access to a copy of this signed letter. A second copy was kept as part of the records for this study. The purpose of this form was to clearly indicate that participation was voluntary and that there are no known risks to participation, while providing the overall expectations of the participants and study, identifying the ethical implications, as well as providing consent to be interviewed and audio recorded (Creswell, 2013). Ethical considerations continued throughout the entire process of this qualitative study, and concerns were taken into consideration at each step of the process – prior to the interview, while conducting the interview, and following the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009).

During the interview process, participants had the opportunity to choose the environment in which the interview took place, in order to ensure comfort and cause the least disruption to their time. In order to ensure security for all participants, contributors were made aware that they had a right to withdraw from participation of this study at any time, without penalty. There were no known risks involved with participation. To further minimize risks that might be associated with specific interview questions, that may trigger emotional responses or discomfort, participants were given the opportunity to read over the interview questions prior to the interview, while making it very clear that at any time they could choose to refrain from answering a question, and/or withdraw from participation.

Once the interviews were conducted, confidentially was maintained at each step of the data analysis process. Supportive and respectable relationships were established with all participants, pseudonym names were assigned, and confidential identity information or any markers related to schools or students were removed (Creswell, 2013). These steps were taken to ensure privacy was upheld for each of the participants. Brinkmann & Kvale (2009) argued that qualitative researchers are also responsible for evaluating and understanding their own personal practice, and recognizing the above moral and ethical issues that may have occurred by staying
involved and refining one’s intuition. Confidentially was also maintained by providing evidence, not falsifying details, and avoiding plagiarism by relying on the appropriate citations necessary (Creswell, 2013). Participants also had the opportunity to review transcripts at any time, in order to update, remove, or change any statements that were made. The transcriptions from interviews were used solely for the purpose of this assignment, and were only viewed by the research supervisor and course instructors. A formal paper and presentation were completed based on the contents of this interview and are accessible to a wider online audience; however, confidentiality was maintained throughout this process. It was communicated to participants that all data, including audio recordings, will be stored on a password protected laptop computer, and recordings will be destroyed after 5 years.

3.6 Methodological Limitations & Strengths

It is important to point out the strengths and limitations that exist within this study and to provide further details that help to explain the strengths and limitations that are present. The sample size for this research was relatively limited, as the specified parameters allowed for a maximum of 2-3 interviews to be conducted. However, given that the purpose of this research was to investigate how a sample of primary school teachers were implementing customized programming with a focus on the development of emotional intelligence – a limited sample size still assisted in fulfilling this requirement. Secondly, the scope of the MTRP research requirements limited this study, as only teachers or some form of educators could be interviewed. Consequently, possible candidates such as students, parents, student teachers, and volunteers were unable to participate and provide insight during the interview process. Based on the scope of this research project, surveys and/or classroom observations could not be conducted, thus limiting a view of the broader context and instruments utilized to collect data. Lastly, once again, given the parameters for this study, interviews were limited to 45-60 minutes. Therefore, the interview questions were carefully selected and targeted the key goals for the research study (Creswell, 2013). A majority of these limitations were due to the ethical parameters set by the University of Toronto and the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education to conduct and approve the Master of Teaching Research Project. With these limitations in mind, the following research findings still play a significant role in advising the topic at hand, however, should not be used to generalize findings for all teachers.
The major methodological strengths of this study focus on the ability to conduct semi-structured face-to-face interviews with teachers and educators. The semi-structured component allowed for depth in conversation that surfaced through interview questions. This allowed participants to expand on their answers, speak to their experiences, and elaborate on what mattered most to them (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The interview structure allowed teachers the opportunity to reflect on their own practices, while providing meaning to their lived experiences.

3.7 Conclusion: Brief Overview & Preview of What is Next

Chapter 3 provides a detailed overview of the methodological decisions made for the research study. This includes an overview of the research approach, procedures, and instruments employed in the form of a qualitative study that uses semi-structured face-to-face interviews to collect and analyze data. This chapter also addresses the participant framework, which includes sampling criteria, procedures employed, and background information and questions used. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical review, along with the methodological limitations and strengths. Next, Chapter 4 will include a comprehensive look at the research findings, as well as a discussion of what was learned, the questions raised, and findings related to the literature review.
Chapter #4: Research Findings

4.0 Chapter Overview

The following chapter provides a detailed look at the research findings generated by the three face-to-face interviews conducted with pertinent educators. The chapter is structured into six key themes that were identified throughout the analysis, as well as a variety of sub headings to further support the organization of the study. Each section elaborates on the overall theme identified, integrates and evaluates the participant voices, and provides an analysis of the implications given the literature review findings.

The chapter begins with an overview of the significance of emotional intelligence and the bearing it is said to have on a child’s whole life, based on the views of the research participants. Next, the findings provide answers to the driving research questions, as it outlines how teachers conceptualize emotional intelligence and bullying prevention in theory and practice. Further aligned with the research questions, the discussion then highlights the findings as they relate to the factors that support and challenge a teacher’s efforts. Thereafter, the findings outline the overall goals and culture that support the fostering of emotional intelligence, and lastly, the recommended strategies that teachers are utilizing to promote emotional intelligence and prevent bullying in their classrooms.

4.1 Significance of Emotional Intelligence on a Child’s Whole Life

Participants recognize the significant impact that emotional intelligence can have on a student’s learning, as well as the decisions they make throughout all aspects of their lives.

Throughout the interview process all three participants emphasized the strong correlation of the development of emotional intelligence at an early age and the impact it has on a child’s ability to learn in the classroom, but also the broader effect it can have on all aspects of a child’s life. Participants agreed that teaching students about emotion starts at a very young age. Each interviewee identified a variety of outcomes, which connect the lack of emotional education in the classroom to the possible negative impacts on a child’s life. Each participant took a different approach, but the overall key factors identified that correlate with emotional intelligence education include, the attitude and response to learning, the ability to develop meaningful
relationships, the influence on the development of character and sense of self, the decision making process, and the overall well-being of the child.

### 4.1.1 Attitudes & Response to Learning

Prior research, as communicated in the literature review, has stated the unavoidable correlation that emotional state and well-being can have on a child’s ability to act and learn (Darling-Hammond et al, 2005; Goldstein & Jeffrey, 2012; Zhu & Thagard, 2002). To highlight the true significance of emotional intelligence on the overall future well-being of a child, Ava compared emotional intelligence to academic intelligence:

> Because we are rushing to teach students the curriculum, we are forgetting, that you know what, if academically you’ve got it up there, its there, and in time it will come out. But if we don’t teach that emotional intelligence or help guide some of that, it doesn’t matter, it’s their whole lives.

Luke took on a different approach and highlighted what happens when emotional intelligence is not taught, and the severe consequences that may proceed. He made connections to how character contributes to learning and overall attitude towards life:

> Students who really don’t care about their character usually don’t care about school, because if they are not caring about what happens in school, it’s a spiral effect, a pretty negative one. They just start to develop an attitude of ‘I don’t care in life’, and they have no foresight for how that will affect them down the road.

Luke suggested that as teachers we have the ability to influence character, and with this ability comes the power to influence their education. From a learning standpoint, he explained that when students are struggling emotionally, they are unable to focus on their learning.

> If students come into the classroom frustrated or afraid to make mistakes, they are not emotionally healthy from an academic standpoint. Therefore, they are not going to be able to achieve the success that they otherwise could have.

Although frustration is a common emotion, what the teachings of emotional intelligence include is the ability to respond to these frustrations in healthy and relatively positive ways. If students do not have this knowledge, Luke explained that they are unable to respond appropriately to their peers and teachers. He described that by including emotional intelligence in our classrooms, teachers have the capacity to increase the probability that students will become life long learners and will thus adopt a work ethic that will take them further in their educational lives.
4.1.2 Relationships & The Development of Character

Alternatively, Nina did not focus on the correlation between emotional intelligence and educational influences; instead she focused on the need to develop skills such as respect, self-empowerment, self-reflection, problem solving, and the ability to advocate for oneself. Nina stated:

If students can respect themselves, they are going to respect themselves enough to put forth the best effort in their schoolwork, and they will strive to become a better person emotionally and in general enhance their individual character.

She believed that it is the development of these skills that correlate to ones ability to be happy, develop relationships, and improve overall performance. It is these character traits that contribute to a child’s ability to get to know themselves, self reflect, and therefore guide their future lives.

Although Nina spoke in general to the influence on relationships, Ava specifically brought to light the future impact that these skills have on the development of these relationships. She clarified that when someone is emotionally stable and has the aptitude to express themselves, they are better able to have and keep successful, component relationships.

The literature is focused on how actions impact the lives of other individuals (Zhu & Thagard, 2002). However, this was not as much a priority throughout interview responses, as the focus was on the impact to the child’s life and relationships, but not on how one’s actions impact others.

4.1.3 Decision Making Processes & Overall Well-Being

Participants highlighted just how integral the role of emotional intelligence is on not only the current state of the student, but also on the development of a child’s future decisions and character. The effect that emotional intelligence has on decision-making, was an agreed upon connection featured in both Luke and Ava’s responses to the interview questions. It serves as a significant factor that emotional intelligence not only impacts a child in the classroom, but also has a wider bearing on the decisions they make throughout the rest of their lives. Luke pointed to personal experiences growing up and watching people in his life go down a variety of paths as the key driver to his commitment of the development of a child’s character, and how it influences their future decision making processes. In his experience, he found that children tend to make poor decisions due to the fact that they have never had the opportunity to prepare to make those decisions. He outlined that the starting point should be to first teach students how to treat people,
because without this understanding, when a student is faced with a decision, they are not going to understand why they should or should not act in certain ways. He concluded that it is this early education that influences decision making processes, which will influence the path that is taken down the road, and all throughout life. Alternatively, Ava conveyed that shaping a child’s decision-making process is the ultimate end goal for teaching emotional intelligence. She commented:

> When we talk about self-regulation, teaching kids how to problem solve, teaching them how to use strategies, teaching them ways to be in control of their own feelings and their own thoughts, so that in the end they can make good decisions and better choices in life.

Gini et al (2007) uses empathy as a core characteristic when describing emotional intelligence in relation to the decisions and actions that one makes. This work emphasizes that individuals who are highly empathetic are more likely to anticipate negative emotions that could be produced by their own conduct towards another person, and therefore, are able to control and self-regulate to prevent their own behaviours. The literature and findings alike suggested that there is an unfortunate danger to each of us, at a local and global scale, that presents frightening issues if children grow up with knowledge, but lack empathy and the teachings of emotional intelligence. These teachings support a child’s development of a moral compass that is required to appropriately utilize their knowledge in meaningful ways (Gardner, 2013; Lau, 2012). The magnitude is clear, as Ava states, “if we don’t teach emotional intelligence early or help guide some of that, it doesn’t matter, it’s their whole lives.”

### 4.2 Conceptualization of Emotional Intelligence in Theory & Practice

**The educators selected conceptualize the meaning of emotional intelligence as ones ability to connect feelings to an outcome. In practice, participants outlined their understanding by identifying core characteristics that they associated with high emotional intelligence.**

All participants observed clear attributes that contribute to their understanding of emotional intelligence. In practice, participants conceptualized the meaning of emotional intelligence through the demonstration of a child’s self-awareness and respect for oneself and others, the capacity to express and advocate for oneself, and the ability to show empathy towards others. Similarly to the findings, Akers & Porter (2007) also break down the meaning of emotional intelligence into five defining characteristics, which include, self-awareness, self-
regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. In both the findings and the literature, understanding emotional intelligence was done predominantly through the lens of the characteristics that are associated with high emotional intelligence, and thus does not focus on the features that indicate a low emotional intelligence.

4.2.1 Emotional Intelligence in Theory

Ava explained emotional intelligence in relation to academic intelligence. She explained that academic intelligence is something that is relatively more concrete, whereas being emotionally intelligent is harder to measure. She described that emotional intelligence contributes to one's ability to utilize emotions in ways that further enhance oneself or a given situation, by connecting feelings to an outcome and using foresight when making decisions. She gave the example of:

When I see some of the kids who have that pull on the emotional level, they are the kids who are able to read the social queues, able to work the environment to their benefit, who are aware of who likes them, who doesn’t, and can play to those understandings. This is where I see the strengths of emotional intelligence as being very different from academic intelligence.

Hoffman (2000) suggested that emotional intelligence is like a spectrum, and just because someone has some aspects of emotional intelligence, does not mean they have the qualities to positively influence situations. This was a significant piece that was left out of participant voices. Ava vaguely mentioned that emotional aptitude can contribute to the ability to manipulate the environment, however, the participants did not focus on the possibility that emotional intelligence can be used to negatively control situations. As well, this brings to question whether bullying is an example of high emotional intelligence on some aspects of the spectrum, but not on others.

Nina’s articulation of emotional intelligence focused on a child’s ability to advocate for themselves by using appropriate language, the expression of emotions, needs and wants, and the capacity to seek out assistance. However, she outlined that the ability to advocate for oneself is followed by a personal awareness of oneself – “it’s about knowing who you are inside, knowing your authentic self, what makes you unique, and then being able to advocate for yourself and being able to communicate your individual wants and needs.”

4.2.2 Emotional Intelligence in Practice

It is essential to understand how teachers and educators in the industry are truly conceptualizing emotional intelligence, not only in theory, but also in their practice. This provides
a context and a starting point when identifying strategies to focus on the development of the critical aspects that make up emotional intelligence.

In practice, Ava identified that children sometimes lose sight of the connection that they have to others, and they become too focused on their own need to succeed. Therefore, children and adults alike forget to help each other out, and they become oblivious that they are in fact all on the same team. Consequently, Ava conceptualized emotional intelligence as not only an individual understanding, but also one’s ability to make connections to others. Similarly to Nina, Ava conceptualized emotional intelligence as a means of learning to respect oneself, and being able to advocate for your needs and wants, while learning how to respect others. She furthered her response to explain where teachers fit into this equation:

I think it’s just to empower the kids by providing them with an understanding of what emotional intelligence looks like and sounds like, delivering the language, and modelling empathy for others. Because if you can empower them to believe in themselves and to know who they are, then they will find the words they need to express themselves, and if they can’t then we will help them to see or express what they need. Then they will choose to speak up for themselves, be their own advocate, and seek help.

The literature identified that emotional intelligence is something that can be learned, whereas some literature claims that these characteristics are an inborn trait that is natural to born leaders (Daily Post, 2012; Goleman, 2001). It is interesting to recognize that the question of innate skillsets vs. learned skillsets was never brought into question throughout the interview process. Instead, I believe candidates assumed that like many other intelligences, emotional intelligence is something that can be learned and nurtured through the appropriate and early education, environment, and opportunities created.

4.3 Conceptualization of Bullying & Bullying Prevention in Theory & Practice

Participating educators conceptualized bullying as any intentional act that makes someone feel unhappy about themselves or their abilities. Teachers recognize that bullying prevention is associated with emotional well-being but is not a one size fits all approach, and must be carried out in a consistent manner that is reinforced throughout the school year.

Participants emphasized the significance of developing bullying prevention strategies that align with the characteristics that lend itself to the development of emotional intelligence. In order to assist the interviewees in conceptualizing the meaning of bullying, they provided some
reasoning for why bullies choose to act in the ways that they do. All participants described bullying in practice through a variety of different examples and forms of bullying that they witnessed in the classroom. These forms of bullying are centred on the differences that make up individual students. The findings showed a lesser focus on the theoretical definition of bullying (physical, emotional, cyber), and more of an emphasis on the reasons for bullying behaviours.

4.3.1 Bullying in Theory & Practice

The inability to understand people different from ourselves can cause great confusion for some students, and according to Nina this incapacity to connect to others can trigger forms of bullying. Through a variety of stories and experiences of the participants, they have uncovered a list of the different forms of bullying in practice. These indicators include bullying based on visible minorities, such as race, sexual orientation, gender, and socioeconomics. Through experience, participants outlined that bullying could also be based on high or low amounts of intellect, high amounts of sensitivity, and based on peer influences or pressures to fit in. One story that Nina shared is about a little girl’s struggle with her sexual orientation:

If she was going to the bathroom, she would use the boy’s bathroom, if she was wearing clothes, all of her clothes were track pants and sweatshirts, she hated the colour pink, and she hated anything that was remotely girly so people started to bully her.

Luke’s understanding of why children bully focused on a natural immaturity that children possess at young ages. He explained that this immaturity could cause frustration, selfishness, the risk of giving into impulses, and a lack of compassion and respect for others. In its simplest form, he stated that:

They’re immature, they don’t care sometimes what other people think, and they just care about how they feel. They don’t have that degree of compassion that they should, but we can’t forget they’re kids. So that’s why we need to teach it.

Ava also suggested that bullies, often time, lack the maturity and intelligence to empathize with the situation and the victim. As children, they do not yet have the comprehension skills to make the connection that their actions can have consequences for themselves and others. Similarly, Nina supported that sometimes children are just unaware of the repercussions that their actions can have.

Another fundamental finding addressed in Ava’s responses was the significance of letting go of the negative connotation with the bully and instead giving the bully the opportunity to work through and express the reasons for their actions. From the bully’s perspective, she outlined that:
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Bullying to me is not having their basic needs met...Its feeling alone, or not having anybody...Sometimes the victim becomes the bully, maybe because they were not successful in getting help for themselves...They are looking for immediate gratification for whatever it is they need at the moment...Maybe they are not feeling academically capable, and so they look to other distractions or things that will make them look good at something, or that make them feel superior...Bullying to me is usually when somebody is not feeling too good about themselves, so they seek out external ways to feel better, and I think its important to teach the students who are not feeling too good about themselves ways to feel better.

The literature warns that when the definition of bullying is seen as too vague, it may lead to the over classification or the misclassification of random acts of aggressive behaviour as bullying (Griffin & Gross, 2003). Based on research findings, this was not something that was called into question, however, further emphasizes the importance of teachers having an accurate understanding of what constitutes bullying and bullying behaviours.

4.3.2 Bullying Prevention in Theory & Practice

In order to prevent against bullying, teachers have to understand and be able to detect the factors that influence bullying and the vast reasons for its occurrences. It is through this detection of the forms and causes of bullying, that teachers can enact targeted strategies to promote emotional intelligence and combat bullying behaviours.

When describing bullying prevention in theory, participants agreed that bullying prevention entails proactive teaching that supports the development of the characteristics that lend itself to emotional intelligence. Luke argued that “proactive teaching means being consistent, so even letting it slide one or two times, you can’t let that happen, because then kids think its ok to treat people like that.” There was also a wide consensus amongst participants that there was no one-way to deliver bullying prevention, it is an individualized classroom approach that Nina explained as:

A bunch of things, like its not just one technique or one program, or one month, or one day...it can’t be a one day thing, it needs to be done consistently and reinforced throughout the year.

In correlation with research findings, the literature also notes that generally bullying is defined through the driving behaviours of the bully, rather than through the perceptions and harm caused to the victim (Griffin & Gross, 2003). Although this was not specifically mentioned in the research findings, it is important to note that fostering emotional intelligence in the classroom
lends itself to empowering not only the victim, but also the bully, as a means of teaching positive communication and behavioural responses.

4.4 Factors that Support & Challenge Teacher Efforts

The interviewees acknowledged that there are external factors such as demographics, diversities, home and life experiences, and board and school wide roles that play a significant part in a child’s emotional development and can either support or challenge the work that teachers do.

The research findings showcased a set of external factors that either positively or negatively impacts the work that teachers are doing in the classroom. Demographics and cultural and socioeconomic diversity include factors such as the school neighbourhood, parental income and values, student lifestyle and the diverse cultures, races and languages that make up the school community. As well, it speaks to the predominant nationalities that schools are comprised of. In addition, aspects such as a child’s home and life experiences, and parental influences can either support or challenge the work for teachers and students. Lastly, participants identified board and school wide approaches and roles, as another factor that can impact the work done in the classroom.

On a broader scale, the participants also spoke to other difficulties they have experienced, outside of the areas mentioned above. Nina explained that the curriculum itself should incorporate the teachings of emotional intelligence, and as a classroom teacher, it can be truly challenging to find ways to teach everything that is expected, and to incorporate what we feel is important for our students down the road. Ava described that the expectation now is to give children a lot of freedom, and this assumption can sometimes be a challenge for teachers to navigate around. She elaborated that it sometimes seems as if we have lost our voice in the classroom, and people expect us to be more accepting and passive of the behaviours that exist. She explained that she has encountered a lot of people who do not truly understand the significance of teaching emotional intelligence, and they just do not see it as a critical aspect of the classroom. But in the end, without the commitment to focus on integrating emotional intelligence, Nina states: “doing a half way job of teaching something, does not do anyone any good.”

The major challenge mentioned by participants’ is that a lot of this work that relates to dealing with bullying, and teaching emotional intelligence in the classroom, is something that is
very much at a teacher’s discretion. The challenge with that is that some teachers choose to include it, and some do not, so there is a tremendous inconsistency when new kids enter your classroom. And because its not required within the curriculum, some administrators support this inclusion through assistance, resources, and school-wide approaches, while others do not take notice. Luke admitted, that he still questions whether he is truly integrating emotional intelligence in the classroom. He explained that the confusion comes from the inability to truly assess and track development, and that many teachers are including aspects of emotional intelligence, however, it is not a one size fits all approach that is easily measurable. Therefore, there is an added element of complexity when teaching for emotional intelligence, as it is truly going to depend on the students in your classroom, he stated:

There are so many different ways that it could play out in the classroom, and its going to play out differently depending on the dynamics of the classroom, and what the students are bringing with them.

4.4.1 Demographic, Cultural, & Socioeconomic Diversity

Students bring their identities into the classroom, and it is the communities they are a part of, and the traditions and values that their parents embody, that act as the basis of what children bring with them into the classroom. And although at a large scale, the differences that make up individuals are what make each classroom unique, teachers have identified some challenges associated with these cultural differences. Participants spoke to language barriers, and differences in family values as being a major obstacle when teaching and communicating with students and parents. Ava identified a significant progression that has taken place:

A lot of parents who are first generation in Canada, they are new to the country, so the basic language, English, becomes a struggle when communicating. Even in my own upbringing, the community used to spend all day outside playing, they weren’t talking about feelings or how we were doing each day, because that wasn’t a part of the norm. Now, these values have changed, and it can be a challenge to get families to align with these changes and further encourage emotional learning.

Nina spoke to cultural values as a significant influence in the classroom. She explained that within her school, a lot of the families are ones who put high standards on the education system, and they really take what teachers say to heart. She described that these parents put great value on grades, additional homework, and are constantly overlooking their children’s efforts. She spoke to this through a cultural context, and explained that these values generally support her work in the classroom. However, when explaining the disadvantages of these influences, she speaks to the fact
that some parents do not put enough value on the importance of socialization, extra curricular activities, and a well-rounded curriculum that includes emotional learning. Similarly, Ava noticed that a barrier for her students is that sometimes parents have very high expectations of their children, and therefore students feel pressure to perform and please their parents.

**4.4.2 Home & Life Experiences**

One of the most significant barriers to learning includes what the child is seeing and experiencing outside the four walls of a school. This relates to their family life, sibling and parental influences, home structure and supports, or lack there of. Every child comes into the classroom with their own stories, with their own experiences, and this considerably influences a child’s behaviours and emotional well-being. Nina elaborated that as teachers, we have to try to consider all factors when dealing with students and the behaviours in the classroom, she stated:

> Each and every child is coming in with a different set of circumstances and a different life experience, and those life experiences are what affect their behaviour, their attitude, and their character.

Luke also maintained that as teachers we cannot ignore that there is a relationship between student actions and how they are treated at home. He described that if a child is being exposed to negative circumstances, or if they are being torn down at home, then there is an undeniable correlation with their behaviours in the classroom, and as teachers we have to take those factors into consideration. He also alluded to the difficulty of handling each situation in isolation from one another. He explained that there have been many instances where the same students are getting into trouble, but as teachers it is our job to ensure that we are detaching each situation in a way that does not target children, and we are considering all other factors that may be contributing to their negative behaviours.

Luke raised an interesting perspective, where he speaks about the change in dynamics that he has witnessed amongst parent and teacher relationships overtime:

> I hate when I feel like what I am doing in the classroom to try to develop a child’s character is just being fought against by parents. I think it’s because of the fact that people have lost respect for teachers and they don’t realize how much teachers are doing to develop character in children. Instead of fighting against parents, we should really be coming together, and working to support the best interests of their child.
4.4.3 Board & School-Wide Approaches

Swearer (2009) suggests that policies in place to actually prevent bullying are highly dependent on the board, school, and individual classroom teachers to implement and carry out in meaningful and effective ways. The findings in this area showcased both the benefits and the barriers that are present based on the support that teachers have from a board, school, and administrator level. As a collective group, participants generally explained that when dealing with bullying situations, as well as fostering emotional intelligence in the classroom, there were no set strategies or policies that they were expected to follow. When dealing with bullying occurrences, each circumstance was based on teacher discretion, and administrators and parents were brought into the conversation depending on severity. Nina explained that the school broadly promoted emotional learning in the classroom, however, described that it is not something that anyone was forced to do, and they never came together to discuss strategies. In contradiction to the findings, the literature suggests that Ontario legislation articulates that all boards require effective prevention policies and programming that teachers should all be aware of (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, p.3). Contrary to this, teachers identified that they were unaware of policies and procedures that existed at a board level, which may emphasize a misalignment between board policies in theory and practice.

Alternatively, Luke emphasized that the principal at his school was kept in the loop for a majority of situations that arose, and often times it is the principal that dealt with the final outcome and conversation with the child and/or parents. He further discussed the importance of developing, as a collective group, an overall tone and attitude of respect throughout the school, as this empowers what individual teachers deem important in their own classrooms, and that generally is something that needs to be encouraged by the principal.

So as teachers, support staff, and administration, we all need to consistently check in and make sure we are on the same page, in terms of what is expected of staff and students, and discuss strategies to implement these expectations throughout the student body. This allows staff, students, and administration to all be on the same page and know what to expect.

When discussing board level supports, many teachers spoke to the Character Matters initiative as being the major approach taken at the board level to develop character education in the classroom. Each month, schools focus on a specified trait, and a student in each class who exemplifies the given quality is selected to receive the award at a monthly assembly. The limiting
factor here is that it is entirely at a teacher’s discretion whether they provide class education around what the character trait means and what it looks like in the classroom.

When participants were asked about what supports they would want from a higher level, Nina suggested that it would be nice for schools to provide an approach to dealing with situations where students are feeling bullied or uncared for. Ava added from her experience and training as a child and youth worker, that she believed it would be truly beneficial for all teachers to go through similar preparation. She emphasized that this type of training would arm teachers in bringing therapeutic activities into the classroom, which focus not only on the curriculum, but also the emotional necessities of learning. Furthermore she added:

They make a curriculum around math and language and what that looks like. But I think they need to look at what emotional intelligence looks like, and how to develop children in that area, and have a curriculum in that!

Professional development was a topic that was not discussed throughout the interview findings. This suggests a possible area for improvement when dealing with bullying prevention at the school and classroom level, as the research proposes that some teachers are reluctant to intervene in bullying situations or are ineffective when preventing and intervening (Lazurus & Pfohl, 2010; Marshall et al, 2009; Olweus, 1993).

4.5 Overall Goals for Developing Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom

Participating teachers identified the significance of developing a purposeful classroom structure as a condition to promoting a culture that fosters a safe, inviting, and respectful environment that can focus on building relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

Overall, the research findings suggest, that the first stage of developing emotional intelligence focuses on the classroom structure, culture, and feeling that is embedded into the classroom. Participants provided a variety of key components that need to be encouraged to promote a positive and safe classroom culture. Nina explained that a classroom culture should begin to be shaped at the very beginning of the year, and it needs to be continuously fostered through all aspects of ones teaching. Luke identified the importance of building a culture where students feel safe to make mistakes, where their voices matter and opinions are heard. Luke promoted making mistakes through giving out “high-fives for mistakes”, he explained that it exaggerates the importance of trying, and changes the mindset to associate mistakes as a positive
aspect of learning. At a broad level, participants described that the goal was to develop an environment that felt inviting, accepting, safe, and respectful. These traits need to be promoted and weaved throughout the classroom structure and encouraged throughout the relationships developed in the classroom.

4.5.1 Classroom Structure

Overall, there were meaningful correlations amongst how participants chose to setup their classroom structure. Nina pointed out, that each year her classroom structure significantly changed based on the students and the type of environment that is necessary for their learning. Luke spoke to the importance of classroom flow in terms of desk setup and daily schedule expectations. He explained that his physical classroom is set up in a way that allows for small group discussion, and large group discussion, where students are always able to see each other, which lends to more meaningful and intimate class conversations. He also emphasized the importance of classroom routine, and providing students with daily organization in regards to scheduling and expected movement. He found that when breaking from routine, students would lose their focus, which often caused confusion and misbehaviour.

Ava and Nina focused on the aspects of creating a safe and inviting personal space for students. They spoke to the importance of building a classroom structure that is comfortable for all students; this can be done through rugs, pillows, and comfy chairs. They both encouraged the development of quiet spaces inside or outside the classroom, where students can go to feel safe, to relax, or to just take a break. Ava spoke to an area outside of her classroom called the ‘quiet zone’ where her students had the opportunity to take a break. Each individual child had a specific plan and communication method in place to ensure proper, safe, and fair use of the space. Nina encouraged the use of spaces that are personalized by students, such as their own hook or desk space, she explained that this personalization allows children to feel included and recognized within the classroom.

Classroom walls are often something that we look past, however, it can have a significant positive impact on the dynamics in the classroom, if utilized appropriately. Ava described the posters in her classroom, and spoke to the fact that they provide students with visual and written strategies that could be used daily. She had a bulletin board with posters that include deep breathing strategies, questions to assist in conflict resolution, and tactics to use when emotions are running high (for example: go for a walk, go to your quiet space, write in your journal, talk to a
teacher etc.) Like Nina, she also expressed the importance of showcasing student work and providing students with personalized spaces in the classroom that are special to who they are.

The literature and research findings both showcase predominantly consistent factors that involve creating a safe, inviting, and physically comfortable environment through the use of desk spacing, groupings, areas for students to relax, and the content featured on the walls (Mortiboys, 2012). The one component specified through the literature review, which was not found in respondent answers, was the focus on the available space for active movement in the classroom. Mortiboys (2012) explains that it is critical to create a physical environment that allows for active movement and available space. He also clarifies that the physical atmosphere itself is not enough to promote emotional intelligence, and just acts as a basis for the development of a strong and supportive learning environment.

One component of the classroom structure that was not discussed in the research findings includes the teacher’s role and position within the classroom, from a structural perspective. This would be an interesting component to investigate further.

4.5.2 Relationships Based on Mutual Respect & Trust

If they know that you care about them, you can teach them, you can teach them in regards to well-being, academics, sports, you can teach them in any way. If they know and feel that you care, and if they know that they can come to you for anything, then they’ll respect you.

Luke validated the undeniable connection and overarching goal for every teacher – getting through to your students in a way that they know that they can always count on you. Luke explained that if you can show them that you genuinely care about all aspects of their lives, and then you can build a relationship with each individual student that is truly based on respect and trust. Ava added that in order to develop mutual respect, you as the teacher must acknowledge the things that are going on in their lives, you must recognize that these situations are real for them, and you must show them that they do not have to deal with their struggles alone.

The findings recognized that mutual trust and respect amongst the student-to-teacher and peer-to-peer relationships does not happen overnight, and can take significant time to build with individual students. All participants agreed, that one of the most significant aspects of building relationships within the classroom is modelling the behaviours that you want to encourage. Ava described, “if we are teaching students how to cope when they are frustrated, or how to self
regulate, we have to ensure that we as teachers are not just yelling at the class when we get angry, its about modelling the skills that we want them to develop”.

Ava and Luke expanded on the importance of being transparent with students, and telling them how it is. Ava said, “I think when we are teaching emotional intelligence we need to say it as it is, we are not blunt in many ways, lets give them choices, and have them make the decision for themselves.” Luke extended on this concept, by articulating the critical aspect of outlining progressive discipline procedures for the class, so that students are aware that actions have consequences, and they are the ones that dictate what happens to them, in the classroom, and in life. Both Luke and Ava supported that when we are able to have a very real talk with our students, and share our own feelings, fears, frustrations, and disappointments, students feel respected and trusted.

According to the findings, developing mutual trust and respect in the classroom also involves taking the time to really get to know the students and the diversities that exist, while providing a continuous stream of feedback and praise.

It can be something so simple, like writing something specific where you know the child realizes, wow, my teacher is so nice, and she notices these things. She really makes me feel unique and special. It’s about having them feel recognized and praised, celebrating their accomplishments, and strengths, and not focusing only on weaknesses.

Nina further described the importance of using tactics such as surveys, class discussions, and individualized communication methods to get to know the students and their individual needs. She reminisced about one student who was not able to always speak up and advocate for herself, but Nina developed a communication method with the student, where she would use pink sticky notes to communicate various feelings and anxieties throughout the course of the day.

Luke talked fondly about the large group discussions he would have with his classes. He explained that it provided him insight into the challenges his students were facing, and he would try his best to incorporate those understandings into the curriculum. Luke highlighted, that more importantly, the group discussions allowed students to see that other people were also dealing with similar issues, and as a class work through it together, and students do not have to feel alone. A teacher’s job sometimes is really about listening, about hearing your students, being cognisant of what is going on and addressing the things that are important in their lives. He stated, “If I could just do one thing, it would be to constantly remind my students that I care about them.”
Baker (2006), in correlation with the research participants, also suggests that the key to creating an emotionally safe atmosphere is dependent on the teacher-student and peer relationships. He supports that children should feel heard and respected enough to know that the teacher will protect their integrity and right to learn without humiliation. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) also agrees that the key is to encourage risk-taking and assist in developing their self-confidence in a safe place where they feel comfortable taking chances and making mistakes. By providing safe learning opportunities and guaranteeing that problems are dealt with in a fair and timely manner students begin to feel safe rather than threatened in their environments (Baker, 2006; Darling-Hammond et al, 2009).

4.6 Strategies for Bullying Prevention & Fostering Emotional Intelligence

Teachers outlined individualized strategies that are framed through the lens of active discussion, positive role modelling, praise and student recognition, integrated activities and themes, feeling responses, decision-making paths, and community programming and resources.

When asked to provide the strategies being used, specific to developing emotional intelligence in the classroom, each participant had developed customized approaches to integrating emotional intelligence into their everyday learning and curriculum. Teachers found that the ease of integration came from providing students activities that allowed them to utilize and practice their emotional intelligence skills, and work through situations in a safe and respectful environment, where feedback was available. The findings suggested 6 key areas that help to focus teacher’s efforts.

4.6.1 Identifying Feelings & Developing Vocabulary

All three participants observed the importance of focusing activities and communication around the development of vocabulary to allow students to appropriately express their emotions. Ava argued that this should be carried out in stages and from a very young age, and the vocabulary should continue to become more complex as the student progresses through school. She elaborated that building vocabulary in the classroom involves geared activities and role-playing scenarios that allows practice utilizing the terminology. It also involves positive role modelling on the part of the teacher, so that students are consistently exposed to the vocabulary in suitable contexts.
Especially in those primary grades, Ava described that it is important to assist students in connecting their feelings to appropriate responses. Ava claimed that this could be done by promoting structure and assisting students in working through identifying their feelings given various scenarios. The role as the teacher is to provide students with ways to deal with those feelings, and to model what it looks like in practice. Ava used ‘I feel’ statements to assist students in working through their feelings on paper, or even orally when necessary. Ava found that some students had a difficult time saying sorry and owning up to their mistakes, because it had not become a part of their everyday vocabulary. So as teachers, it is our job to develop the mindset that it is okay to make mistakes, but we must aid students in developing the vocabulary necessary to explain their mistakes, own up to them, and to apologize.

4.6.2 Incorporating Student Voice in the Classroom

Nina used a journal method called ‘Fresh Friday’s’ that provided students with the opportunity to start each week fresh. Students were asked to write Nina a letter explaining two things they liked during the week, two things they found difficult, and one thing they wish they could change, and they were required to explain why. She described that this provided her students with a voice in the classroom and an avenue to express themselves and communicate with the teacher. Nina added, that she would always write back to each student, and follow up with individuals or group conversations when necessary. Furthermore, she clarified that it is not okay to just have one communication method with all students, and it is important to ensure individualized communication methods are in place when necessary. Some students may not feel comfortable sharing their comments through a personalized journal; therefore, she also used suggestion boxes in the classroom, where students can anonymously leave notes for her. Each week she used the suggestions to plan activities and integrate the voices of her students into her class lessons for the following week.

4.6.3 Developing Decision Making Strategies

Luke argued that as we build a child’s vocabulary we should also be preparing students with strategies to deal with the situations that occur in their lives, and begin to walk them through the decision making process. Ava added that sometimes they do not have the necessary words, so we have to ensure we are providing them with the appropriate language and steps that will be useful in working through situations, and arm them with all the tools necessary to make good decisions. Luke used a specific strategy he called ‘planting your flag’, which allowed students to
decide on a position during various scenarios in the classroom, thus helping the child work through the decision making process and land on a decision that they were comfortable with. He used this during conversations when situations would arise in the classroom. He utilized this insight to better understand what students may be dealing or struggling with outside of the classroom. He warned, that it is imperative for students to be exposed to appropriate modelling, and the teacher must aid children in walking through the appropriate steps to arrive at a decision. Ava used small group programming to assist students in working through the situations that they were encountering in their own lives. She provided examples of small groups that she had pulled from the classroom to deal with different topics that were relevant to them. She explained that she worked with girl groups to talk through some of their common concerns, and work on what it means to be a good friend and to alleviate bullying situations. She had also worked with groups of boys to help provide them with mechanisms to manage their anger, express their frustrations, and provide them support in a safe environment, outside of the immediate classroom. Ava, Luke, and Nina noted that they used regular community circles to provide students with the opportunity to share, communicate and connect with each other, so that children did not feel alone when dealing with situations in their lives. Ellison (2011) supports the use of circle time for younger age groups, as a method to develop community, and encourage discussion that promotes diversity, and positive sense of self. Sullivan (2011) further states that circle time allows the opportunity to discuss difficult situations as a class, given that students feel comfortable with one another and the culture is based on a strong community.

Ava described that as a Child and Youth Worker she had taken workshops to understand how the brain works, and how we can choose different roads in our brain that correspond with the different paths that we take in life. She emphasized, that one of her best educating moments was when she was able to share this information with a challenged student who was really struggling with making good decisions. She was able to explain to him the dynamics of the brain and how we can choose different paths, however it is something that our brain can actively learn and choose to do. She reminisced back to when she could see the light bulb go off in his head, where something just clicked for him, he began to understand that he could be in control of his own choices and he wanted to work to get his brain better at making those decisions.
4.6.4 Student Recognition, Praise & Feedback

Each classroom must encourage consistent praise, through daily communication, and also through set methods administered to recognize student’s hard work and strengths. Luke joked that sometimes he overdoes the verbal praise at the beginning of the year, to ensure that students realize that I am noticing them, and I always want to build them up throughout all aspects of my teaching, so that they continue to show their best. Luke used a tactic where he had set up a ‘boo yah and oops’ program in the classroom. Where students were split into groups, and each team moved across the ‘boo yah’ line when praised for showcasing positive behaviours and effort, and across the ‘oops line’ when participating in negative behaviours. Nina would celebrate the individual and group achievements in her class any time she got. She used the Journey to Excellence and Character Matters as a means of introducing critical life skills and for recognizing student contributions. She described Journey to Excellence as a program that consists of seven critical life skills that she integrates into the classroom through discussion, stories, and focused activities. These skills include uniqueness, intuition, reflection, visualization, goal setting, mentoring, and community service. She explained that she used this program instead of Tribes to develop her student’s emotional wellness and to empower them with a strong sense of self.

4.6.5 Goal Setting & Accountability

Although not discussed in great detail, the research findings do suggest the importance of consistent reflective practices as an important component to fostering emotional intelligence. Ellison (2001) & Sullivan (2011) agree that the articulation of goals, creation of portfolios, and submission of journal entries, and consistent reflection acts as a necessary component for children to truly develop a deep and thoughtful understanding of their feelings.

Luke used the pyramid of success in his classroom, which he explained was a program designed for the corporate world. He used it as a way to teach students how to achieve their personal best, as each block of the pyramid provided strategies to work towards their best self. He referred to it as a metric of everything he does in the classroom, to remind students what their personal goals are for the day, and each student is the one responsible for setting and achieving those goals. Ava claimed that we should let students develop a voice in our classrooms, by changing the dynamics of a teacher student relationship, and ensuring that we hold students accountable for their actions and words, and teach them how to work through problems, and how to reflect on their decisions.
4.6.6 External Supports & Programming

Ava also spoke to the external programming that takes place throughout the school year. She provided examples, such as the Dove program, that comes in to talk to both boys and girls about skewed images in the media, and body image. She explained that the York Centre does programming called Taking Charge of Me, where they help students work through and manage their anger and frustration. They focus on the development of self, and encourage personal growth, and help students to identify the factors that can trigger them, scare them, and make them angry or nervous. Her school also worked with VIP, which is a police program that speaks to grade 6 students about various issues as they relate to values, influences, and peers.

Ava spoke to a strategy that her school used called ‘recess leaders’. She elaborated by explaining that students are hand selected to assist others in the schoolyard by helping to solve disputes, working through problems and concerns, and getting to work and play with other students. She explained that the goal of the program is to provide at risk students with leadership opportunities within the school community, and allow them to give back and feel purposeful. This is something that is used to not only benefit specific students, but to disseminate the coping strategies that the students have learnt, with other students in the broader school community.

4.6.7 Teacher Watch Outs & Strategies

Nina emphasized the importance of making our teaching relevant, and genuine. Nina and Ava both supported that it can sometimes be a disservice to hold all students accountable for one child’s mistake and to just address behaviours as hypotheticals. Ava added that it is important to identify students who need the extra support in developing their emotional intelligence. The literature also supports the notion of building individualized support for struggling students, and ensuring the growth of social skills, attitudes, and the development of positive teacher and peer relationships (Pepler & Craig, 2014, Sect. 3, p.1). Ava elaborated that by using small group situations, you can draw from student experiences and make the conversation more relevant and meaningful to those involved. She encouraged, whenever possible, that it is beneficial to bring the students together, help them work through the dynamics of the situation, allow students to see your disappointment, and emphasize that you are there to support and assist them in working through this issue. She highlighted that the most critical component is making sure students know where to go to find the support and assistance they need, and to never make them feel like they have no other options, or have no one to go to who cares.
Swearer (2009) suggests utilizing storytelling as a starting point for launching discussion, problem solving, and teaching perspectives as a means of developing emotional intelligence and teaching the skills that lend to bullying prevention. The literature also suggests that artistic activities such as drama and role-play can be introduced to assist students in developing emotional language, raising empathy, and increasing a child’s perspectives in differentiated situations (Pepler, Craig, & Ziegler, 1993). Similarly, Sullivan (2011) also agrees that arts and performance can be a beneficial means of allowing children to be taught the difference between right and wrong, and work through difficult situations, while developing appropriate vocabulary.

Pepler and Craig (2014, Sect. 3, p.2) outline that bullying is a relationship problem, and therefore they too support the view that bullying prevention requires an approach to developing a child’s emotional intelligence and character traits as a foundation for change.

4.7 Conclusion

According to the research findings discussed throughout this chapter, as well as the relevant literature examined in chapter 2, there is a clear bridge that connects bullying behaviours with inadequate education in emotional intelligence. However, the purpose of this paper is to focus on how elementary school teachers conceptualize bullying and emotional intelligence and what they are doing in practice to cultivate a classroom environment that prioritizes emotional intelligence. The educators involved in this study have outlined the meaning of emotional intelligence and bullying prevention in theory and practice, they have provided examples of the strategies and competencies that are purposefully encouraged, and they have further summarized the factors and resources that support and challenge the work that they do.

The findings suggest that developing emotional intelligence requires a passion and commitment to the development of the whole child. Building a curriculum that integrates emotional intelligence starts with the teacher, and is impacted by a variety of external factors. The key to success is to learn about your students and the diversity they each bring into the classroom, and to continue to learn about the important aspects of their lives and to apply those needs and interests. Secondly, it is developing a structured environment that fosters relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Lastly, it is important for teachers to uncover the strategies that suit their own needs and more importantly the individual needs of their students. This paper provides
examples of strategies that can be adapted to align with the specific requirements of any classroom.

Next, chapter 5 will expand on these findings and discuss its significance on the broader public, its importance for the research community, as well for the future of beginning teachers. The next chapter will also identify areas for future research, and make recommendations to support the work of school boards, teachers, and the overall education system.
5.0 Chapter Overview

The following chapter provides a detailed look at the implications that these research findings have on the broader educational community, as well as the effects on my own teaching practices and work as a researcher. Chapter 5 will also include a brief section that outlines meaningful recommendations for the education ministry, school boards, administrators, teachers, and professional development associations. In order to provide a stepping-stone for future research, this chapter will then address relevant areas where educational scholars can continue this imperative work. Lastly, to conclude this research paper, a short summary of the overall significance will be discussed.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings & Significance

According to the research findings discussed throughout chapter 4, as well as the relevant literature examined in chapter 2, there is a strong correlation amongst bullying behaviours and the development of emotional intelligence. Bullying is a behaviour problem, therefore as the literature explains, the focus of prevention should be placed on supporting students with the tools and skills necessary to effectively understand situations, vocalize their emotions, and take appropriate steps to deal with the issue (Paolo et al, 2006). The research findings suggested that teachers recognize the significant impact that emotional intelligence can have, not only on a student’s learning in the classroom, but also on the behaviours they exhibit, and the decisions they make throughout all aspects of their lives. One participant further outlined that he found that children would generally make poor decisions due to never having the opportunity to prepare to make those decisions. Just like children need to be taught how to read or write, they also need to be taught what it means to act and react appropriately, which align with the teachings of emotional intelligence. Therefore, in order to prevent bullying behaviours in our classrooms, teachers have to start by teaching students how to treat people, because without that understanding when a student is faced with a decision or situation, they are not going to understand why they should or should not act in certain ways. The findings concluded that early education plays an impactful role on influencing the decision making process, which will influence the path that is taken down the road, and throughout all aspects of life.
The findings suggested that educators conceptualize emotional intelligence as one's ability to connect feelings to an outcome. However, in practice they found that emotional intelligence is actually demonstrated through several characteristics that support self-confidence, and understanding and security of oneself. Similarly, Akers & Porter (2007) break down the behaviours of emotional intelligence into five defining characteristics, which include self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. Therefore, teaching emotional intelligence in practice begins with a personal understanding of the core characteristics that support this type of learning. Based on the findings, the goal becomes developing a student’s ability to be self-aware and understand and express their feelings so that they can have the confidence to make good decisions and advocate for themselves.

Participants described their understanding of bullying through a lens of experiences and explanations for why bullies choose to act in the ways that they do. Therefore, focusing less on the theoretical definition of bullying (physical, emotional, cyber), and more towards the reasons for bullying behaviours. This showcases a clear indicator that both the victim and the bully need assistance in working through and developing a better understanding of what happened and why each party reacted in certain ways. This process provides the student with the ability to identify triggers, reflect, and share their feelings. When it comes to bullying prevention, the findings suggest that teachers emphasize the importance of creating prevention strategies that align with the characteristics that lend themselves to the development of emotional intelligence. Based on the research findings, there was a wide consensus amongst participants that there is no one clear way to deliver bullying prevention; it is an individualized approach that depends on the needs of each classroom and teacher. However in practice, in order to be effective, prevention must be carried out in a consistent manner that is reinforced by all stakeholders throughout the school year.

Interviewees acknowledged that a child’s emotional intelligence and the process they use to make bullying decisions are impacted by a variety of external factors that either support or challenge a teacher’s work in the classroom. Broadly, these factors include home and parental influences, cultural diversities, and board and school wide policies and roles. Some of these factors provide the opportunity for variability, which acts as a critical starting point when making recommendations to help support the mission of developing a sense of emotional intelligence for students in the classroom. With a clear and supportive mission, and assistance and advocacy from key parties, teachers can focus their work on the individual strategies used to prevent bullying and
foster emotional intelligence in the classroom.

Overall, the findings suggest that the classroom structure is a condition for promoting a culture that fosters a safe, inviting, and respectful environment, and a focus on building relationships based on mutual trust and respect. The literature clarifies that the physical atmosphere itself is not enough to promote emotional intelligence, and just acts as a basis for the development of a strong and supportive learning environment (Mortiboys, 2012). In light of the existing literature, the research findings don’t just focus on the significance of teaching emotional intelligence. Instead, this study takes the next step towards actually doing so, while emphasizing its significance through the frightening nature of bullying. These findings act as a foundation for teachers by providing specific areas to focus their efforts and by identifying actionable approaches that are successfully being used to practice the skills of emotional intelligence.

5.2 Implications

This next section seeks to identify the effect that the research findings have on the broader educational community, as well as the consequences for my own professional identity and practice.

5.2.1 Implications for the Educational Research Community

The purpose of education has been a highly debated topic, and although it is difficult to truly identify the one key purpose of education as a whole, many have maintained that education is to “support children in developing the skills, knowledge, and the dispositions that will allow them to be responsible, contributing members of their communities” (Sloan, 2012). The Ontario Ministry of Education identifies the purpose of education to include the development of intellect at all grade and subject areas, to foster a love for learning and nurture a child’s natural curiosity, to prepare young people to be contributing citizens in their local and global communities, to prepare students for adulthood, work, and career development, and to instil core values that align with the morals of society. In order to uphold these purposes and carry them out in schools across Canada, educators, school boards, administrators, and teachers are challenged with this opportunity. One of the key areas described in both purposes of education is a focus on developing the dispositions or values that align with good citizenship. Therefore, as educators we have the responsibility and obligation to limit behaviours that threaten the purposes of education,
such as acts of bullying, and we have to encourage the development of social and emotional skills, as the purpose of education spans to developing the whole child, and not solely intellect.

The findings outlined that there are great disruptions to instruction that take place when bullying behaviours occur in the classroom, as these behaviours interfere with the very purpose of education. Therefore, teachers and administrators alike have to find ways to prevent and limit these interferences. The research findings suggest that bullying behaviours surface due to inadequate emotional intelligence, therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the educational community to ensure schools, administrators, and teachers understand the significance of emotional intelligence education and have the resources, supports, and knowledge to implement and carry out strategies that impact and shape a child’s emotional development. Supported by the literature and research findings, in order to prevent bullying we must focus on teaching the skills that lend itself to emotional aptitude. Participants identified 5 key categories that help to focus these efforts. It was identified that teachers should help students to develop the ability to identify their feelings through emotional vocabulary, incorporate student voice, recognition, praise and feedback into the classroom so that children feel respected and valued, assist students in practicing decision making strategies and holding them accountable for their decisions, and create opportunities for students to actively reflect and set future goals.

The participants also highlighted the importance of the role of the board, school, and external programming to assist in aiding teachers in developing and fostering necessary skills. These components were critical factors that impacted the success of a teacher’s efforts in the classroom. Interviewees identified a lack of supportive strategies and policies to deal with bullying occurrences, and explained that often it is left to the teacher’s discretion. Participants are advocating for the creation of clear rules, expectations, and direction through the form of a curriculum document, so that all administrators and teachers are required to work towards developing a child’s emotional learning at each stage of their education. The findings suggested that teachers should undergo professional development where they are actively trained to deal with bullying and emotionally charged situations, and can learn about different therapeutic strategies that can be applied across all classrooms.
5.2.2 Implications for My Professional Identity and Practice

As a future teacher, these findings reemphasized just how important it is to develop a sense of community and safety in the classroom, and ensure that we are educating around the aspects of the whole child and not just feeding their brains, but also their hearts. I strongly believe that the role of an educator is a tremendously powerful one, and if students know that they are safe and cared about in their classrooms, then there is an immense opportunity to impact children’s lives. These findings have aided me in discovering and better articulating my own philosophy of teaching. My goal as a future teacher is to create a classroom culture that is inviting, respectful, and safe, and one that focuses on building relationships that are based on mutual trust and respect. My hope is that each of my students leave with a better understanding and acceptance of oneself and their unique strengths and abilities, and with that comes the acceptance and respect of and for others. I want each of my students to learn to advocate for themselves, for others, and for things that they strongly believe in. If I can help to positively develop the character in each of my students, even just slightly, then I know that I have done my job.

In my future practice, I want to dedicate a specific part of each week to developing the social and emotional skills discussed throughout this research paper. Teaching and fostering emotional intelligence will be seen in all aspects of my curriculum, but by dedicating allotted time to focus on emotional learning, I can provide my students with a depth of understanding and arm them with the skills and opportunities to practice these traits in a safe and structured environment. I want to empower my kids by educating them on what emotional intelligence is, what it includes, what it looks like and sounds like, and deliver and model it in a way that resonates with them. My focus will be to develop an open culture, where students feel safe and comfortable sharing their feelings and opinions through community circles, discussions, writing, or one-to-one conversations. My goal is to expose them to something more, bring relevance into the classroom, while helping them to make connections to the broader world, and giving them a platform to freely ask questions and discover themselves and the world around them. Literature, current events, videos, and classroom scenarios all act as great starting points to introducing topics of discussion that can lead to opportunities to allow students to speak openly, ask questions, develop a depth of understanding, and practice uncovering their emotional self. I truly believe in the power and impact that teaching emotional intelligence can have on the development of a child’s whole life and I want my students to feel empowered to be confident enough to express and advocate for
themselves. Ultimately, above all my aim is to make sure that each and every one of the students that walk into my classroom know that they are important, that no problem is too big, that their life is worth living, and that they feel safe and cared for in our classroom community. In the words of one research participant, “if students know that they are cared about, you can teach them, you can teach them in regards to well-being, academics, sports, you can teach them in any way. If they know and feel that you care, and if they know that they can come to you for anything, then they will respect you.”

During my interviews, one of my participant’s words truly stood out to me, Ava emphasized that “bullying is not having basic needs met and it takes place when somebody is not feeling too good about themselves, and therefore seek external ways to feel better.” As a future educator, I have to continue to remind myself that each and every child comes in with a different set of circumstances and life experiences that impact their attitudes, behaviours, and character. As teachers, we have the ability to play a role in each child’s life and to set them up for success in developing their own morals, perspective, and character. As a researcher, these findings continue to fuel my interest and passion to learn more about the topics of emotional intelligence and bullying behaviour. I do believe that going forward my own practice will involve continuous informal, or formal research, specifically in the area of bringing emotional intelligence education into our schools; with an emphasis on developing policies, procedures, and strategies that can be incorporated into each and every Ontario classroom.

5.3 Recommendations

Research is constantly being conducted in order for individuals and groups to gain specified knowledge on a topic. The continuous process of learning through research is essential and critical for the continuity and improvement of our lives, communities, and global societies. Educational research is no different, and this paper provides insight into the correlation amongst bullying behaviours and emotional intelligence education. However, the purpose of this paper, for the broader educational community, is to not only demonstrate the significance of this topic on education, but also to bring light to what elementary school teachers are already doing to cultivate a classroom environment that prioritizes emotional intelligence. Thus providing educators with a starting point of integrating similar examples and strategies into their own schools and classrooms. Based on this research and my findings, the following are recommendations for the
education ministry, school boards, administrators, teachers, and professional development associations that I believe could have tremendously powerful impacts, if implemented.

5.3.1 Recommendations for the Ontario Ministry of Education

At the Ontario Ministry of Education level I believe there is an opportunity to create a curriculum guide that focuses on the development and education of the skills that lend itself to emotional intelligence. I envision either a document that is supplementary to subject specific curriculum guides, or the integration of emotional intelligence goals into the overall and specific expectations of each curriculum document. For example, within the literacy document an overall expectation may be to use emotional intelligence vocabulary to articulate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. More specifically, this could include the ability to demonstrate an understanding of appropriate classroom conduct, communication with peers, and the ability to identify with different points of view. In math and science documents, this could include expectations associated with teamwork and problem solving tactics. Emotional intelligence learning would also play a vital role in the arts document, to encourage active integration of working through difficult, relevant, and relatable scenarios using a variety of different art forms and means of expressing emotions.

5.3.2 Recommendations for School Boards

School boards can have an immense influence on individual school goals and decisions, and therefore act as the overarching umbrella that is needed to support the inclusion of emotional intelligence in our schools. I recommend that school boards emphasize the resources that are available and pinpoint individual schools that need extra support, resources, and individualized programming to foster the development of emotional intelligence and handle situations and behaviours. One example would be to develop a board wide mentoring initiative across schools, that pair up identified students who are struggling behaviourally, emotionally, or due to various home-life factors with teacher or student mentors. Therefore, providing these students with safe places, leaders, and activities to participate in that focus on their behavioural and emotional development. In addition, I think that all schools should hire at least one Child & Youth Worker, or introduce a similar role, such as an Emotional Intelligence Coordinator. If funding is limited, schools can look to already existing part-time or full-time teachers and provide them with the necessary training to take on the additional role within the school community, with the intention of providing some flexibility when necessary to step out of their own classrooms. These roles
would focus on working with troubled students, handling behaviours, and also observing and working with teachers to develop and implement appropriate strategies for fostering key social and emotional skills in the classroom.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Administrators

In regards to administration recommendations, I believe it is critical to develop a supportive culture and trustworthy partnership between staff and administrators. The same way community is developed in the classroom, administrators also have to take steps to get to know their staff and create an inclusive and supportive community between members. As the research suggested, not all administrators prioritize these needs within their schools. Therefore there needs to be more consistency and accountably across administrators, in order for them to focus on developing a series of school-wide steps to handle bullying situations in a serious manner. That includes supporting teachers in all situations, and ensuring that all staff know that administration should and will be a part of the process, and will provide immediate assistance to teachers and students in all circumstances. To showcase the support for developing emotional intelligence, administrators can develop initiatives such as Character Matters, which is already enacted in many school boards across Canada. Where a character trait is promoted throughout the school each month, and select students are recognized and awarded for displaying the trait. The more these programs are enacted in schools and taken seriously by administrators, the more importance will be seen across teachers and students within the school community. Although this is already being done, I would advocate for principals to dedicate at least two periods of literacy per month to provide a mandated focus on teaching and working with selected character traits and unpacking the meaning and significance for students. Lastly, instead of suspending students for particular behaviours, this could be replaced with student behavioural developmental workshops. Where instead of staying at home during a suspension, students participate in workshops that better help them to understand their wrongdoings and actions, and work towards solving problems and implementing solutions.

5.3.4 Recommendations for Professional Development

Professional development workshop opportunities are also a critical component to the recommendations provided for boards and administrators. Specific workshop opportunities should be mandated for new and veteran teachers to participate in, with a focus on teaching for emotional intelligence in the classroom and dealing with severe bullying situations. This time should be
grant
ed to teachers during school hours, as well as through additional outside of school conferences. Given the literature and research findings, teachers often felt uncertain and unprepared to handle bullying situations without adequate support. Therefore, workshops can assist in closing that gap, and providing teachers with actionable strategies to handle situations, and approaches to cultivating emotional intelligence as a means of preventing bullying behaviours. Administrators should also ensure that teachers who have children with higher behavioural needs, are provided with ample strategies, where they can get the necessary supports to better handle and deal with these circumstances. Great knowledge should be shared, and I would recommend that teachers across school boards have opportunities to meet with each other and discuss the strategies that have worked to improve behaviours and encourage emotional intelligence education in their classrooms. We should be learning from each other, and schools that are promoting emotional intelligence in meaningful ways should be used as a model for change. Parents should also be given the opportunity to attend various school workshops that are created to educate them on strategies to deal with behaviours at home, that align with the school philosophy, and to assist in fostering emotional intellect in their own children.

5.3.5 Recommendations for Teachers

For teachers, the recommendations align with the strategies, examples, and critical components of creating a classroom community as outlined in chapter 4. Based on the research findings, this includes utilizing strategies such as:

- Feeling responses
- Student voice journals
- Suggestion boxes
- Community circles
- Mock scenarios
- Small group/one-to-one check ins
- Character trait exploration
- Leadership opportunities such as recess leaders or student mentors

- Consistent feedback and praise through a variety of different forms of communication
- Guiding goal setting and accountability through programs such as Pyramid of Success
Aligned with the conclusions of this research, the overarching goals for achievement are to utilize the above strategies to meet the objectives of:

- Demonstrating positive role modelling
- Developing emotional vocabulary and the ability to identify feelings
- Incorporating student voice in the classroom
- Arming students with decision making strategies
- Providing consistent student recognition, praise and feedback
- Encouraging goal setting and accountability
- Utilizing external and community resources to further enhance education

By implementing a variety of the recommendations above, the hope is that it will have a trickle down effect on teachers. As a greater emphasis is put on emotional intelligence, more teachers can begin to understand and learn about the significance of imparting this knowledge onto the students in their classrooms. If the mission from the top down becomes clear, I believe teachers will be forced to find ways to educate themselves and their students on these aspects. As mindsets begin to shift, teachers will become more open to focusing and spending time on the development of social and emotional intelligence. The research findings clearly suggested the significance of getting to know your students and developing a classroom culture and environment that is safe and inviting for all, as the foundation for success. I would recommend that classroom teachers dedicate the first two weeks of the school year to focus on getting to know the students, as well as providing opportunities for students to get to know one another. The early weeks of any school year are critical to the development of the overall culture and community, and are required to set a positive and inspiring tone for the entire year, along with outlining the clear rules and expectations for teacher and students.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

An interesting component for further research may be to understand how critical the role of administration and support from the top is when implementing new approaches to education. The key here is understanding what exemplary administrators are doing to foster emotional intelligence education within their schools, and how are they supporting their teachers in this mission. Given what I found, it would also be interesting to further investigate if the Ministry has any future plans to integrate
emotional intelligence education into the curriculum, and in what areas of the curriculum will this be implemented.

**5.5 Concluding Comments**

This research focused on the link that emotional intelligence has on decision-making and behaviours, and thus how the development of strong emotional aptitude can lead to better quality relationships and a reduction in the amount of classroom bullying. This work can act as a starting point to provide schools, administrators, and teachers with strategies, examples, watch-outs, and resources, to begin incorporating emotional intelligence education into their schools and curriculum. Through a look at exemplary teachers, and the ideas that they have created and implemented into their own teaching, this provides a great avenue and stepping-stone to begin this important work. Some of the recommendations above, and the changes to the broader systematic approaches, act as future goals for a wider change to the education system.

Today’s children are tomorrow’s leaders, and something more has to be done to tackle this real and frightening issue of bullying. The story of Amanda Todd, and other cases surrounding bullying persisted tragedies portray clear indicators that bullying can have tremendous emotional and financial costs to young people all over the world. The research has found that victims of bullying, and bullies themselves, are at a higher risk of developing emotional disorders during adulthood, and are more likely to contemplate or plan suicide (Gardner, 2013). The facts are right in front of us, and therefore as educators, school boards, administrators, teachers, and staff members, it is our responsibility to find ways to reduce and eliminate these hardships in our schools. The gap between intervention and prevention is still prevalent, and this research supports that there is a strong correlation amongst bullying and emotional intelligence that cannot be ignored. If emotion can impact action, then as educators we must intervene to ensure children can detect, understand, and regulate their emotions in positive and enlightened ways, so that they can go on to make good decisions and become confident and contributing members of our global society.
BULLYING & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: __________________

Dear ______________,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying how teachers foster emotional intelligence and the outcomes they observe on bullying behaviors, for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 45-60 minute interview that will be audio-recorded. I would really appreciate if you would allow me to interview you whenever is most convenient.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Researcher Name: Zenia Tarapore
Phone Number:(416) 996-3561 Email: zenia.tarapore@gmail.com

Research Supervisor’s Name: Dr. Angela MacDonald
Email: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Zenia Tarapore and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ____________________________

Name (printed): ____________________________

Date: ____________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introduction:
Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this research study; your assistance is greatly appreciated. As mentioned, the aim for this study is to learn what elementary school teachers are doing to foster emotional intelligence in their classrooms. And further understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying behaviours.

The interview should take approximately 45 mins – 1 hour. I will be asking you a series of interview questions, try to be as specific as possible when answering the questions. And provide examples when necessary. I will be recording notes, and there will be an audio recorder picking up your answers.

If at any time you would like to refrain from answering the question or continuing the interview, please just let me know. You have the absolute right to choose to refrain from answering any of the following questions. Before we begin, do you have any questions or concerns?

Background Information:
1. How many years have you worked as a teacher?
2. What grade(s) are you teaching currently and where are you teaching?
   a. What grades have you previously taught?
3. How would you describe the school community in which you are a part of? (E.g. diversity, socioeconomic status, behaviours of students & fellow teachers and administrators etc.)
4. If you were to describe one goal for yourself as a classroom teacher what would it be?
5. What sparked your interest in the topic of emotional intelligence and/or bullying? (E.g. personal, professional, and/or educational experiences)

Why – Beliefs & Values:
6. What does emotional intelligence mean to you?
   a. How does emotional intelligence relate to children and the classroom?
   b. What does it mean to teach for emotional intelligence?
   c. What are your goals for students, in regards to learning and practicing emotional intelligence?
   d. Why do you believe it is important for students to learn and practice emotional intelligence (i.e. what are the benefits)?
7. What does bullying prevention mean to you?
   a. What does bullying prevention entail?
b. How would you define bullying?
8. In your opinion, what key factors contribute to classroom bullying?
9. In your experience, what have you observed, if anything, about the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying behaviour? Please be as specific as possible.

**What/How – Teacher Practices & Strategies:**
10. How do you set the stage for teaching students about emotional intelligence at the beginning of the year?
   a. What goals and/or learning outcomes are included?
   b. What does the physical classroom environment and daily structure look like?
   c. How do you promote mutual trust and respect amongst the teacher-student and peer relationships?
   d. What specific strategies or activities do you introduce throughout the year that supports and/or maintains the teachings of emotional intelligence?
11. Can you give a specific example of a strategy that has been successful, and what do you think made it successful?
12. Are there any specific programs that you use to foster emotional intelligence or anti-bullying behaviour? Why do you use these programs?
13. Describe the bullying behaviours present in your school and/or classroom (E.g. prevalence, patterns).
14. What have you found are successful and/or unsuccessful strategies for dealing with bullying behaviours in your school and/or classroom?
15. How are teachers and staff members expected to respond to bullying situations in your school? (I.e. what prevention, intervention and/or steps are being followed).
   a. Has your school implemented any specific anti-bullying prevention programs or protocol related to bullying?
16. Please provide examples of specific scenarios in which bullying has gotten better or worse, and explain why you think that may be.

**Influencing Factors & Challenges:**
17. What are the resources/supports necessary to carry out a comprehensive emotional intelligence learning approach?
18. What challenges or obstacles have you faced in your practice of fostering emotional intelligence in the classroom? How have you responded to these challenges?
   a. How might the education system further support you to meet these challenges?
19. In your opinion, what would be the major factor contributing to classroom bullying?

**Conclusion:**
Thank you so much for your time and participation, I will be in contact shortly with a copy of the transcriptions for you to review.