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# A Study of the Perceptions of Students, Staff, and Parents Regarding Conflict at Mary Miller Junior High School, Georgetown-Ridge Farm Community Unit School District # 4, Georgetown, Illinois

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A Study of the Perceptions of Students, Staff, and Parents Regarding Conflict at

Mary Miller Junior High School

Georgetown-Ridge Farm Community Unit School District # 4

Georgetown, Illinois

BY

Robert A. Rice

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**FIELD EXPERIENCE**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

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CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1999

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## Abstract

Too often in schools across the country students and teachers have felt unsafe. Students and teachers have been threatened physically, verbally, and have experienced violence. Besides creating fears, violence in schools has diverted energy and resources from instruction. The researcher believed that based on recent national happenings regarding school violence, it was important to assess the school environment at Mary Miller Junior High School to identify if any problems existed regarding safety at school. It is not surprising that one of the National Education Goals for the year 2000 was to establish safe, disciplined, and drug-free schools that offer an environment conducive to learning.

This field study, conducted during the spring of 1998, gathered data concerning perceptions of students, staff, and parents of Mary Miller Junior High School in Georgetown-Ridge Farm Community Unit School District # 4 in Georgetown, Illinois. The research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding conflict and school climate at Mary Miller Junior High School?
2. What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding the motives for conflicts (disagreements) at Mary Miller Junior High School?
3. What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding various levels of conflict at Mary Miller Junior High School?

A survey, based on a review of national issues from literature pertaining to school climate and conflicts within schools, was designed by the researcher to determine perceptions regarding conflict and school climate, the motives for conflict

(disagreements), and the frequency of various levels of conflict. The researcher administered the survey instrument to staff members at their monthly meeting. Staff members were given instructions and then monitored the students as they completed their survey instruments during their home room period. Survey instruments were given to the students to take home to their parents. The students returned the parent survey instruments to their home room teachers.

The responses of the survey instrument were entered into a computer data file. Filters were generated from the gathered data, and results were displayed. Descriptive analysis using frequencies and percentages were used to present the results. An analysis of the data was presented through the use of tables and was accompanied by narratives.

Results indicated the students felt safe from violence but expressed a concern relating to verbal abuse. Although fights sometimes occurred, weapons were of little concern. Students, parents, and staff could not agree on whether students could handle conflicts peacefully. The leading cause for conflict was rumors or gossip. The perceptions of students, staff, and parents differed regarding the various levels of conflict.

It was recommended that peer mediation and conflict resolution programs be strengthened. A monthly Discipline Committee meeting was suggested for staff and administration. It was further recommended that a district-wide Ownership in Education Committee be organized with student, staff, administration, and parents to meet several times each year to evaluate the policies and expectations of student behavior.

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## Chapter 1

### Overview of the Problem

#### Background

It is important for children to have a safe and orderly school environment. The researcher (Assistant Principal at Mary Miller Junior High School) believed that based on recent national happenings regarding school violence, it was important to assess the school environment at Mary Miller Junior High School to identify any problems which might exist regarding safety at school. Safety includes physical and mental well-being. More specifically, the researcher (in concurrence with the superintendent) felt that feedback from students, staff, and parents regarding levels of conflict would help in planning to insure the school environment was safe, thus, more likely to be conducive to learning.

#### Statement of the Problem

The problem was: What are the perceptions of students, staff, and parents regarding locations, motives, and levels of student conflict at Mary Miller Junior High School in Vermilion County, Illinois? Prior to this study, no systematic data existed to address this problem.

#### Research Questions

The specific research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding conflict and school climate at Mary Miller Junior High School?
2. What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding the motives for conflicts (disagreements) at Mary Miller Junior High School?

3. What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding the various levels of conflict at Mary Miller Junior High School?

#### Assumptions

It was assumed that conflict and violence detract from school effectiveness and achievement. Further, it was assumed that students, staff, and parents can provide information in planning which focuses on a safe and orderly learning environment.

#### Limitations

The following limitations existed:

1. The information returned was dependent upon the accuracy of the perceptions of the respondents.
2. Results may not be able to be inferred to other schools.
3. Parents may not have had as much first-hand knowledge of information related to answering survey instrument items as did students and staff.
4. Perceptual data were used to answer the survey instrument questions.

#### Delimitation

While all schools experience some levels of student conflict in the form of violence or aggression, only sixth through eighth grade students were included in this study.

#### Definition of Terms

Aggression. An action or behavior which attempts to injure or defame another person.

Bullying. The infliction of physical, verbal, or emotional abuse by one or more individuals on another individual or individuals.

Disagreement. A conflict about an idea, event, or tangible item wanted or needed.

Gangs. Groups which threaten to cause or cause bodily harm to others or their family members for the purpose of solicitation or cause membership in the gang.

Harassment. The act of irritating or persistently tormenting another individual.

Levels of Conflict. A measure of the levels of aggression involved in conflicts.

Personal space invasion. Getting in another person's face or space.

Physical attack. Hitting, punching, or slapping.

Physical contact. Pushing or shoving.

Threats and intimidation. Placing another in apprehension of receiving bodily harm, sexual assault, confinement, or restraint

Verbal attack. A conflict involving name-calling, put-downs, teasing, or yelling.

Victimization. Direct personal experience of threats or harm.

Violence. The exercise of power or physical force exerted so as to cause damage, abuse, or injury.

Weapon attack. Using any weapon such as a gun, knife, brass knuckles, or item intended to be used as a weapon (such as baseball bats, scissors, or lookalike weapon) to attack another person.

### Uniqueness of the Study

An analysis of the perceptions of students, staff, and parents regarding conflict had never been done in Georgetown-Ridge Farm Community Unit School District # 4 prior to this study. Thus, this study provided previously unavailable information about the safety of this school environment to decision makers.

## Chapter 2

### Rationale, Related Literature, and Research

#### Rationale

School personnel have been forced to deal with increased discipline problems reflective of aggressive behavior which often causes conflict among students. As Conway noted, "Whether experienced professionals or newcomers in our schools, teachers and administrators alike are challenged by the increasing number of students whose behavior is angry [and] hostile, even violent" (News Release, 1998, p. 1). In the researcher's opinion, too often in schools across the country, students and teachers have reported feeling unsafe due to conflict. Students and teachers have been threatened physically, verbally, and have experienced violence.

#### Literature and Research Reviewed

Violent incidents in schools have increased over the years. From 1990 to 1994, 33% of all individuals responding for cities reported a significant increase in school violence as defined by a student being killed or seriously injured. School violence increased 55% in large cities included in the study and 41% in cities of 100,000 or more. Ten percent of teachers and nearly 25% of students in public schools indicated that they had been the victims of violent acts in school (Hamburger, 1993, p. 2). An Illinois State Board of Education Newsletter (1995, p. 7) described a Metropolitan Life survey conducted in 1995. It reported that 97% of teachers nationwide felt that measures must be taken to emphasize school safety.

The National Crime Victimization Survey data showed that nearly 3 million crimes occur on or near school grounds each year, while 50% of all violent crimes against teens

occur on or near school property. Approximately one in four public school teachers rated physical conflicts among students as being a serious or moderately serious problem in their schools (Nolin & Davies, 1995, p.1). More than 80% of over 2,000 individuals answering for school districts responding to the 1993 National School Boards Association (NSBA) survey believed school violence was currently worse than it was five years ago. The U.S. Surgeon General legitimized violence as a public health issue in 1984, and during 1993 the nation's governors and Congress declared in the National Education Goals that school safety was essential to the broader agenda of school reform (National School Boards Association, 1993, p. 3).

The National Association of School Psychologists estimated that approximately 282,000 students are attacked in schools in the United States every month, and almost 8% of urban junior high school students missed at least one day of school each month because they were afraid to come to classes. Students have been physically and emotionally victimized by fights and attacks. Bullying has also jeopardized the well-being of students (Hazier, Hoover, & Oliver, 1992, p. 20). The statistics for teachers were not much brighter. Every month 125,000 school teachers were threatened with physical harm and about 5,200 were physically attacked (Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services, 1996, p. 1).

A national survey of sixth through twelfth grade students and parents was conducted in the spring of 1993 by Westat for the National Center for Education Statistics. This report surveyed 6,504 students and 12,680 parents. The survey reflected only incidents that occurred at school, including those that may have happened at school-related events (such as sports activities) during the school day or on the way to or

from school (Nolin & Davies, 1995, p.1). Victimization can be defined as direct personal experience of threats or harm. This report expanded the definition of victimization to include knowledge or witness of a crime or incidents of bullying at school. The American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth asserted that "even youth who are not direct victims of violence may be victimized by the chronic presence of violence in their communities" (American Psychological Association, 1993, p. 42). This survey suggested that unsafe conditions at school were a reality for most students in the United States. Nearly 50% of the students surveyed personally witnessed some type of crime or victimization at school, and about one in eight students reported being directly victimized at school.

The study by Westat also determined that students at some schools may be more vulnerable than students at other schools. Three types of incidents were examined--bullying, physical attacks, and robbery. Seventy-one percent of the students surveyed reported having knowledge of bullying, physical attack, or robbery in their schools. Fifty-six percent reported that bullying had occurred in their schools. It was reported by 43% of the students that physical attacks had occurred. Twelve percent of the students reported that robbery had occurred. At least one incident of bullying, physical attack, or robbery had been witnessed by 56% of the students (Nolan & Davies, 1995, p.2).

Twenty-five percent of the students reported being worried about being victimized at school. Ten percent of the students worried about being attacked at school and one third of the students witnessed a physical attack at school. Twelve percent of the students reported having been directly and personally victimized at school. Physical attack was

reported by 4% of the students, 8% reported bullying, and 1% reported robbery (Nolin & Davies, 1995, p.2).

Reports relating to student victimization differed significantly by grade or building level. More elementary (29%) and middle and junior high school students (34%) reported being worried about becoming victims at school than did high school students (20%). Seventeen percent of middle or junior high school students reported being personally victimized, compared to 8% of high school students (Nolin & Davies, 1995, p.3).

Differences by school size were also reported. Students in larger schools were more likely than students in smaller schools to be exposed to bullying, physical attack, or robbery. A greater percentage of students at schools containing 600 or more students than those attending schools of fewer than 300 students reported knowledge of crime or threats at school and witnessing crime. However, there was no significant difference in worry about crime or actual victimization for students in larger schools (Nolin & Davies, 1995, p.4).

Students' perceptions of the safety of their schools varied little by the student's race or ethnicity and the school racial composition. The majority of both black and white students reported having heard of or seen crime or threats. There was no significant difference about worry and victimization based upon the students' race or school racial composition (Nolin & Davies, 1995, p.5).

Male and female students did not differ in their knowledge about bullying, physical attack, or robbery (70-71%). There was also no difference in their witnessing or worrying about violence. Male and female students did differ, however, when it came to having



been personally victimized at school. Males (14%) were more likely to be victimized than were females (9%) (Nolin & Davies, 1995, p.5).

Compositions in classic literature and recollections of students throughout the decades have attested to the common presence of intimidation, threat, abuse, and bullying of students by other students. As schools and communities have attempted to deal with youth violence, and prevent it, the role intimidating students played in contributing to an unsafe or perception of an unsafe environment has emerged. Traditionally, bullying has been defined as "one or more individuals inflicting physical, verbal, or emotional abuse on another individual or individuals" (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1998, p. 3). Typically there has been an imbalance of strength, either physical or psychological, between the bully and the victim. Actions were generally repeated and negative against the individual with a deliberate intention to hurt the other. The aggressive act was usually unprovoked (Slee, 1994, p. 57).

A single student who bullied generated a fearful environment that intimidated other students. Those who bullied, their victims, and bystanders were all affected. Over one-third of middle school students lacked the courage needed to report a student who bullied. These students felt threatened and may have felt teachers and administrators did nothing to stop the bullying (Batsche & Knoff, 1994, p. 168).

Because bullying behaviors provoked sensations of fear not only in the victim, but also in others around that student, researchers urged schools to take an energetic role in addressing the effect of bullies on their school culture and the academic success of their students. Galloway (1994, p. 315) inferred that freedom from fear of bullying was not enough to assure successful education, but it was an essential condition for effective



learning. Hoover, Oliver, and Thomson (1993, p. 84) concluded that, to the extent that bullying established a tense and violent mood in a school, hate crimes might be precipitated.

Bully and victim problems among six classes of 11-12 year old children attending three middle schools were investigated by means of Olweus's self-report Bullying Inventory. About 21% of the children surveyed reported being bullied, and 17% reported bullying others. Reports on bullying and being bullied were more prevalent among boys than girls. Most boys were bullied by boys only, whereas girls were more likely to be bullied by students of either sex. The most common form of bullying was hitting/kicking (Boulton & Underwood, 1992, p. 73).

An analysis of data collected during the first year of a peer mediation and conflict resolution program in a middle school in central Illinois demonstrated the types of conflicts at the middle school level and the level of aggression involved with each conflict (Goulding, 1997, p. 10). The principal and assistant principal of the middle school made 48% of the referrals to the mediation program. Teachers and students contributed 21% and 27% of the referrals respectively. The majority of the conflicts originated in the hallways (43%), followed by bus/bus stops (16%), classrooms (15%), physical education class (11%), cafeteria (10%), restrooms (1%), and streets (4%). The overwhelming majority of conflicts were about rumors/gossip (64%), followed by bullying (27%), boyfriend/girlfriend (4%), disagreement (2%), horseplay (2%), and racial comment (1%). The levels of aggression involved in conflicts at the middle school were also analyzed. Threats/intimidation composed 34% of the conflicts followed by verbal attack (23%),

personal space invasion (17%), disagreement (12%), physical attack (8%), and physical contact (6%). Relief from conflict was sought mostly by seventh graders (42%).

The possibility that students may have experienced or been threatened by robbery and physical assault while at school has sparked national concern. The mass shootings that took place in the schools at different locations in the country during the 1997-1998 school year, combined with the sensationalism portrayed by media coverage, described a picture of the nation's schools as unsafe and violent. So widespread is the image of students as victims that one of the National Education Goals proposed that, "By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" (Nolin & Davies, 1996, p.1). Identifying the incidence of violence in schools and the extent of fear of violence at school among students is necessary in order to measure progress toward reaching that goal. It is essential that schools be the safest place students spend time on any given day. It is also important that schools work diligently and constantly to insure that safety.

## Chapter 3

### Design of the Study

#### General Design

This field study, conducted during the spring of 1998, gathered data concerning perceptions of students, staff, and parents of Mary Miller Junior High School in Georgetown-Ridge Farm Community Unit School District # 4 in Georgetown, Illinois. The survey was designed by the researcher to determine perceptions regarding conflict and school climate, the motives for conflict (disagreements), and the frequency of various levels of conflict. The dependent variable was the perceptions of the responding students, staff, and parents. The independent variable was partitioned by type of respondent. The independent variable was not manipulated. The specific research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding conflict and school climate at Mary Miller Junior High School?
2. What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding the motives for conflicts (disagreements) at Mary Miller Junior High School?
3. What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding the various levels of conflict at Mary Miller Junior High School?

Survey questions 1-15 relate to research question number 1. Survey questions 16-19 relate to research question number 2. Survey questions 20-26 relate to research question number 3.

#### Sample and Population

The population was all the students, staff, and parents of Mary Miller Junior High School (grades 6,7, and 8). The population consisted of 45 staff members, 307 students,

and 298 parents. A random sample was not used. All students, staff, and parents were asked to participate. The returned sample contained all 45 staff members, 293 of the 307 students, and 201 parents representing 298 households. Results for staff members were representative because all staff members responded, as did nearly all of the students. The parent results were the least likely to be representative of the three respondent groups.

#### Data Collection and Instrumentation

During the developmental stages of the survey instrument, a small field test was conducted with five teachers, five parents, and five students from St. Mary's Grade School in Westville, Illinois. This was done to enhance reliability, validity, and ease of use of the instrument. Although no statistical analysis was completed, an effort was made to assure clarity of directions and questions to aid in reliability. The content of the instrument was based on a review of national issues from literature pertaining to school climate and conflicts within schools. In essence, validity was approached by anchoring the content of survey items to reputable sources regarding school sources of climate.

Three survey instruments were developed during this field study. The content was the same for all survey instruments, but the respondent groups were students, staff, and parents. A Likert-type scale was used for responses to each survey item. The response options offered were never, little of the time, sometimes, most of time, and always.

The researcher administered the survey instrument to staff members at their monthly meeting. Staff members were given instructions and then monitored the students as they completed their survey instruments during their home room period. Survey instruments were given to the students to take home to their parents. The students returned the parent survey instruments to their home room teachers.

### Data Analysis

The responses of the survey instrument were entered into a computer data file. Filters were generated from the gathered data, and results were displayed. Descriptive analysis using frequencies and percentages were used to present the results. An analysis of the data was presented through the use of tables and was accompanied by narratives.

Survey questions 1-15 were used to answer research question number 1. Survey questions 16-19 were used to answer research question number 2. Survey questions 20-26 were used to answer research question number 3.

## Chapter 4

### Results of the Study

#### Overview

The analyzed data for each research question are presented in tables. The tables represent the response from students, staff, parents, and all groups combined for each survey item. The respondent groups selected never, little of the time, sometimes, most of the time or always as their response to each question.

The letter n represents the number of responses, and the symbol % represents the percentage of those responses.

#### Results of Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was: What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding conflict and school climate at Mary Miller Junior High School?

Table 1 presents the results for items 1-15 which were used to answer research question 1. Survey instrument item 1 (Students Feel Safe From Violence in This Building) revealed 71% of the total respondents believed that students felt safe from violence in this building most of the time or always. The totals revealed 15% of the students felt safe from violence little of the time or never. Once again, the perceptions differed by students, staff, and parents. Sixty-two percent of the students reported students felt safe from violence always or most of the time as compared to staff perceptions (97%) and parent perceptions (79%).

Survey instrument items 2,6,9,11, and 12 measured student discipline problems occurring in specific locations in the building. Student discipline problems occurred sometimes in the halls (item 2) as perceived by 58% of the respondents. Three percent

Table 1

Results For Students, Staff, Parents and all Groups Combined Items 1-15

| Respondent  | Never    |          | Little   |          | Sometimes |          | Most     |          | Always   |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups  | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u>  | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> |
| <u>Students Feel Safe From Violence in This Building Item 1</u> |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 21       | 7%       | 22       | 8%       | 69        | 24%      | 123      | 42%      | 58       | 20%      |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 1         | 2%       | 38       | 84%      | 6        | 13%      |
| Parents   | 4        | 2%       | 8        | 4%       | 30        | 15%      | 103      | 51%      | 56       | 28%      |
| Total   | 25       | 5%       | 30       | 6%       | 100       | 19%      | 264      | 49%      | 120      | 22%      |
| <u>Student Discipline Problems Occur in the Halls Item 2</u>    |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 7        | 2%       | 33       | 11%      | 143       | 49%      | 75       | 26%      | 35       | 12%      |
| Staff   | 1        | 2%       | 7        | 16%      | 35        | 78%      | 1        | 2%       | 1        | 2%       |
| Parents   | 7        | 3%       | 39       | 19%      | 132       | 66%      | 21       | 10%      | 2        | 1%       |
| Total   | 18       | 3%       | 79       | 15%      | 310       | 58%      | 97       | 18%      | 38       | 7%       |
| <u>The Climate in This Building is Good For Learning Item 3</u> |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 45       | 15%      | 51       | 17%      | 65        | 22%      | 101      | 34%      | 31       | 11%      |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 1        | 2%       | 6         | 13%      | 26       | 58%      | 12       | 27%      |
| Parents   | 8        | 4%       | 18       | 9%       | 34        | 17%      | 103      | 51%      | 38       | 19%      |
| Total   | 53       | 10%      | 70       | 13%      | 105       | 19%      | 230      | 43%      | 81       | 15%      |

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

| Respondent  | Never    |          | Little   |          | Sometimes |          | Most     |          | Always   |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups  | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u>  | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> |
| <u>Students in This Building Handle Conflicts Peacefully Item 4</u>             |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 77       | 26%      | 90       | 31%      | 92        | 31%      | 31       | 11%      | 3        | 1%       |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 2        | 4%       | 19        | 42%      | 23       | 51%      | 1        | 2%       |
| Parents   | 11       | 5%       | 33       | 16%      | 93        | 46%      | 59       | 29%      | 5        | 2%       |
| Total   | 88       | 16%      | 125      | 23%      | 204       | 38%      | 113      | 21%      | 9        | 2%       |
| <u>The Principal and Assistant Principal do a Good Job of Discipline Item 5</u> |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 10       | 3%       | 22       | 8%       | 37        | 13%      | 99       | 34%      | 125      | 43%      |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 1         | 2%       | 24       | 53%      | 20       | 44%      |
| Parents   | 2        | 1%       | 5        | 2%       | 17        | 8%       | 103      | 51%      | 74       | 37%      |
| Total   | 12       | 2%       | 27       | 5%       | 55        | 10%      | 226      | 42%      | 219      | 41%      |
| <u>Student Discipline Problems Occur in the Cafeteria Item 6</u>                |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 11       | 4%       | 69       | 24%      | 147       | 50%      | 47       | 16%      | 19       | 6%       |
| Staff   | 1        | 2%       | 8        | 18%      | 26        | 58%      | 6        | 13%      | 4        | 9%       |
| Parents   | 11       | 5%       | 47       | 23%      | 113       | 56%      | 27       | 13%      | 3        | 1%       |
| Total   | 23       | 4%       | 124      | 23%      | 286       | 53%      | 80       | 15%      | 26       | 5%       |

(table continues)



Table 1 (continued)

| Respondent  | Never    |          | Little   |          | Sometimes |          | Most     |          | Always   |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups  | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u>  | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> |
| <u>Students in This Building are Violent Item 7</u>           |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 30       | 10%      | 122      | 42%      | 82        | 28%      | 41       | 14%      | 18       | 6%       |
| Staff   | 6        | 13%      | 29       | 64%      | 10        | 22%      | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents   | 25       | 12%      | 81       | 40%      | 84        | 42%      | 11       | 5%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Total   | 61       | 11%      | 232      | 43%      | 176       | 33%      | 52       | 10%      | 18       | 3%       |
| <u>Students Feel Proud to be a Part of This School Item 8</u> |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 29       | 10%      | 28       | 10%      | 65        | 22%      | 96       | 33%      | 75       | 26%      |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 1        | 2%       | 14        | 31%      | 27       | 60%      | 3        | 7%       |
| Parents   | 5        | 2%       | 9        | 4%       | 30        | 15%      | 94       | 47%      | 63       | 31%      |
| Total   | 34       | 6%       | 38       | 7%       | 109       | 20%      | 217      | 40%      | 141      | 26%      |
| <u>Student Discipline Problems Occur on the Bus Item 9</u>    |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 30       | 10%      | 70       | 24%      | 144       | 49%      | 32       | 11%      | 17       | 6%       |
| Staff   | 1        | 2%       | 10       | 22%      | 32        | 71%      | 2        | 4%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents   | 14       | 7%       | 60       | 30%      | 111       | 55%      | 16       | 8%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Total   | 45       | 8%       | 140      | 26%      | 287       | 53%      | 50       | 9%       | 17       | 3%       |

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

| Respondent  | Never    |          | Little   |          | Sometimes |          | Most     |          | Always   |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups  | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u>  | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> |
| <u>Fights Among Students Occur in This Building Item 10</u>                 |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 7        | 2%       | 79       | 27%      | 141       | 48%      | 52       | 18%      | 14       | 5%       |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 21       | 47%      | 23        | 51%      | 1        | 2%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents   | 1        | 0%       | 73       | 36%      | 95        | 47%      | 26       | 13%      | 6        | 3%       |
| Total   | 8        | 1%       | 173      | 32%      | 259       | 48%      | 79       | 15%      | 20       | 4%       |
| <u>Student Discipline Problems Occur in Classrooms Item 11</u>              |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 13       | 4%       | 97       | 33%      | 114       | 39%      | 49       | 17%      | 20       | 7%       |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 9        | 20%      | 31        | 69%      | 5        | 11%      | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents   | 3        | 1%       | 63       | 31%      | 94        | 47%      | 37       | 18%      | 4        | 2%       |
| Total   | 16       | 3%       | 169      | 31%      | 239       | 44%      | 91       | 17%      | 24       | 4%       |
| <u>Student Discipline Problems Occur Walking to and From School Item 12</u> |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 58       | 20%      | 83       | 28%      | 91        | 31%      | 43       | 15%      | 18       | 6%       |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 12       | 27%      | 31        | 69%      | 2        | 4%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents   | 25       | 12%      | 67       | 33%      | 85        | 42%      | 18       | 9%       | 6        | 3%       |
| Total   | 83       | 15%      | 162      | 30%      | 207       | 38%      | 63       | 12%      | 24       | 4%       |

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

| Respondent  | Never    |          | Little   |          | Sometimes |          | Most     |          | Always   |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups  | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u>  | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> |
| <u>Students Have had Weapons in This Building Item 13</u>             |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 55       | 19%      | 123      | 42%      | 86        | 29%      | 17       | 6%       | 12       | 4%       |
| Staff   | 6        | 13%      | 31       | 69%      | 8         | 18%      | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents   | 70       | 35%      | 77       | 38%      | 40        | 20%      | 8        | 4%       | 6        | 3%       |
| Total   | 131      | 24%      | 231      | 43%      | 134       | 25%      | 25       | 5%       | 18       | 3%       |
| <u>Students Feel Safe From Physical Harm in This Building Item 14</u> |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 31       | 11%      | 46       | 16%      | 57        | 19%      | 105      | 36%      | 54       | 18%      |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 2         | 4%       | 38       | 84%      | 5        | 11%      |
| Parents   | 3        | 1%       | 3        | 1%       | 40        | 20%      | 114      | 57%      | 41       | 20%      |
| Total   | 34       | 6%       | 49       | 9%       | 99        | 18%      | 257      | 48%      | 100      | 19%      |
| <u>Students Feel Safe From Verbal Abuse in This Building Item 15</u>  |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 86       | 29%      | 47       | 16%      | 65        | 22%      | 52       | 18%      | 43       | 15%      |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 1        | 2%       | 18        | 40%      | 24       | 53%      | 2        | 4%       |
| Parents   | 15       | 7%       | 26       | 13%      | 59        | 29%      | 69       | 34%      | 32       | 16%      |
| Total   | 101      | 19%      | 74       | 14%      | 142       | 26%      | 145      | 27%      | 77       | 14%      |

Note. n = the number of responses. Percents do not total 100% due to rounding.

believed student discipline problems never occurred in the hall while 7% believed they always did. Only 4% of the staff and 11% of the parents thought student discipline problems in the halls occurred most of the time or always while the student perception was 38%.

The results for survey instrument item 3 (The Climate of This Building is Good For Learning) indicated that, based on the total (results of all groups combined), Mary Miller Junior High School had a climate that is good for learning most of the time or always as reported by 58% of the total respondents (students, staff, and parents). Results for this same item indicated only 23% perceived the climate in this building to be good for learning little of the time or never. The perception of the staff was noticeably different from that of the parents and students. Eighty-five percent of the staff perceived the climate as good for learning most of the time or always as compared to 70% of the parents and 45% of the students.

When asked if students in this building can handle conflicts peacefully (survey instrument item 4), 57% of the students responded never or little of the time. Fifty-three percent of the staff reportedly felt the students could handle conflicts peacefully most of time or always. Parents felt confident students could resolve conflicts peacefully. Seventy-seven percent of the parents chose sometimes, most of time, or always.

The principal and assistant principal of this building did a good job with discipline (survey item 5) most of the time or always as reported by 83% of those completing the survey instrument. More specifically, 77% of the students, 97% of the staff, and 88% of the parents felt this building's administration was doing a good job with discipline most of

the time or always.. A good job was done little of the time or never as reported by 11% of the students, 3% of the parents, and 0% of the staff.

The perceptions of students and staff were similar in regards to student discipline problems in the cafeteria (item 6). Twenty-two percent of each group thought problems occurred most of the time or always. Fourteen percent of the parents gave the same response. Two hundred eighty-six (53%) of the students, staff, and parents believed student discipline problems occurred sometimes in the cafeteria.

The results for survey instrument item 7 (Students in This Building are Violent) indicated the students of Mary Miller Junior High School were perceived as violent (use power or physical force to cause damage, abuse, or injury) little of the time or never according to 54% of those surveyed. Only 13% thought students were violent most of the time or always. Fifty-two percent of the students and parents in addition to 77% of the staff perceived student violence as occurring never or little of the time.

The results of survey instrument item 8 (Students Feel Proud to be a Part of This School) indicated the majority of the students at Mary Miller Junior High School (59%) felt proud to be part of the building most of the time or always. Only 20% reported this feeling little of the time or never. Sixty-seven percent of the staff believed students felt proud to be a part of the building most of the time or always, and 78% of the parents reported this perception as well.

The results of survey instrument item 9 (Student Discipline Problems Occur on the Bus) indicated 53% of the total respondents believed student discipline problems occurred sometimes on the school bus while 34% responded never or little of the time. and 12% chose most of time or always.

The results of survey instrument item 10 (Fights Among Students Occur in This Building) indicated students, staff, and parents were in agreement that fights sometimes occurred in this building. Those responding to the survey, 33%, indicated fights occurred little of the time or never, while 19% perceived fights occurred most of the time or always.

The results for survey instrument item 11 (Student Discipline Problems Occur in Classrooms) indicated the percentage of students feeling disciplinary problems in the classrooms occurred most of the time or always was 24%. Results of the same item also indicated 11% of the staff and 20% of the parents agreed. Thirty-seven percent of the students and only 20% of the staff believed student discipline problems in the classroom occurred little of the time or never.

Student discipline problems occurred while walking to and from school (survey instrument item 12) little of the time or never as perceived by 48% of the students. Twenty-seven percent of the staff and 45% of the parents perceived the same.

Weapons have never entered Mary Miller Junior High School (survey instrument item 13) as reported by 24% of those surveyed. Most (43%) reported students have had weapons little of the time. Only 8% of the respondents believed that students have had weapons in this building most of the time or always

Perceptions of physical harm and verbal abuse (survey items 14 and 15) at Mary Miller Junior High School differed as reported by students, staff, and parents. Students (54%) indicated they felt safe from physical harm most of the time or always. Twenty-seven percent of the students reported feeling safe from physical harm little of the time or never. Nearly all of the staff, 95%, believed student felt safe from physical harm most of the time or always. Parents reported that 77% of their children felt this way.

Concerns of verbal abuse were indicated in the survey results. Forty-five percent of the students reported feeling safe from verbal abuse little of the time or never. This compared to 2% and 20% of the respective perceptions of staff and parents. Only 33% of the students felt safe from verbal abuse most of the time or always.

In summation, the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents of Mary Miller Junior High School indicated the students felt safe from violence, but expressed a concern for verbal abuse. Although fights sometimes occurred in this building, weapons were of little concern. The students reported discipline problems occurred most often in the halls. The staff reported the cafeteria was the specific location in this building where student discipline problems most often occurred, and the parents responded the classroom had the greatest discipline problems. The student perception was that students in this building did not handle conflicts peacefully. Staff members and parents disagreed. The principal and assistant principal of Mary Miller Junior High School were perceived as doing a good job with discipline. It was the consensus of the respondents that the students of Mary Miller Junior High School felt proud to be a part of this building.

#### Results of Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was: What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding the motives for conflicts (disagreements) at Mary Miller Junior High School?

Table 2 presents the results for items 16-19 which were used to answer research question 2. Four motives of conflict were examined in this study. Those sources were rumors or gossip, damaged or lost personal property, boyfriend/girlfriend problems, and student/teacher problems. The results for survey instrument item 16 (Conflicts start

Table 2

Results For Students, Staff, Parents and all Groups Combined Items 16-19

| Respondent  | Never    |          | Little   |          | Sometimes |          | Most     |          | Always   |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups  | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u>  | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> |
| <u>Conflicts start because of rumors or gossip Item 16</u>                  |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 2        | 1%       | 10       | 3%       | 71        | 24%      | 107      | 37%      | 103      | 35%      |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       | 12        | 27%      | 28       | 62%      | 5        | 11%      |
| Parents   | 12       | 6%       | 43       | 21%      | 61        | 30%      | 45       | 22%      | 40       | 20%      |
| Total   | 14       | 3%       | 53       | 10%      | 144       | 27%      | 180      | 33%      | 148      | 27%      |
| <u>Conflicts start because of damaged or lost personal property Item 17</u> |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 10       | 3%       | 72       | 25%      | 114       | 39%      | 67       | 23%      | 30       | 10%      |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 12       | 27%      | 27        | 60%      | 6        | 13%      | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents   | 37       | 18%      | 66       | 33%      | 75        | 37%      | 14       | 7%       | 9        | 4%       |
| Total   | 47       | 9%       | 150      | 28%      | 216       | 40%      | 87       | 16%      | 39       | 7%       |
| <u>Conflicts start because of boyfriend / girlfriend problems Item 18</u>   |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students  | 30       | 10%      | 85       | 29%      | 106       | 36%      | 39       | 13%      | 33       | 11%      |
| Staff   | 0        | 0%       | 13       | 29%      | 20        | 44%      | 11       | 24%      | 1        | 2%       |
| Parents   | 58       | 29%      | 67       | 33%      | 53        | 26%      | 16       | 8%       | 7        | 3%       |
| Total   | 88       | 16%      | 165      | 31%      | 179       | 33%      | 66       | 12%      | 41       | 8%       |

(table continues)



Table 2 (continued)

| Respondent   | Never    |          | Little   |          | Sometimes |          | Most     |          | Always   |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups   | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u>  | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> |
| <u>Conflicts start because of student / teacher problems Item 19</u> |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students   | 36       | 13%      | 90       | 31%      | 83        | 28%      | 51       | 17%      | 33       | 11%      |
| Staff  | 1        | 2%       | 19       | 42%      | 24        | 53%      | 1        | 2%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents  | 65       | 32%      | 66       | 33%      | 54        | 27%      | 10       | 5%       | 6        | 3%       |
| Total  | 102      | 19%      | 175      | 32%      | 161       | 30%      | 62       | 12%      | 39       | 7%       |

Note. n = the number of responses. Percents do not total 100% due to rounding.

because of rumors or gossip) indicated 72% of the student respondents perceived conflicts started because of rumors or gossip most of the time or always. Seventy-three percent of the staff agreed with the students, while only 42% of the parents acknowledged the same. Results of the same item indicated conflicts started because of rumors or gossip little of the time or never as reported by 4% of the students, 0% of the staff, and 27% of the parents.

Conflicts started because of damaged or lost personal property (survey instrument item 17) most of the time or always as reported by 33% of the students, 13% of the staff, 11% of the parents, and 23% of the total respondent groups. Damaged or lost personal property created conflict little of the time or never as reported by 28% of the students, 27% of the staff, 51% of the parents and 37% of the total respondent groups.

The results of survey instrument item 18 (Conflicts start because of boyfriend/girlfriend problems) indicated boyfriend/girlfriend problems did not appear to start many conflicts at Mary Miller Junior High School. These conflicts were started little of the time or never as reported by 39% of the students, 29% of the staff, 62% of the parents, and 47% of the overall respondents. Approximately 25% of the students and staff perceived conflicts started because of boyfriend/girlfriend problems most of the time or always. Only 11% of the parents and 20% of the total respondents shared this perception.

Fifty-one percent of the overall respondent group perceived conflicts started because of student/teacher problems (survey instrument item 19) little of the time or never. This perception was shared by 44% of the students, 44% of the staff, and 65% of the parents. Although 28% of the students noted conflicts started because of student/teacher problems most of the time or always, only 2% of the staff and 5% of the parents agreed.

In summation, the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents of Mary Miller Junior High School indicated the leading cause of conflict appeared to be rumors or gossip. The second rated cause of conflict appeared to be damaged or lost personal property. The overall perceptions of conflicts starting because of student/teacher problems or boyfriend/girlfriend problems were nearly identical; however, the students appeared to be more concerned than staff or parents with regard to these conflicts.

### Results of Research Question 3

Research Question 3 was: What are the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents regarding the various levels of conflict at Mary Miller Junior High School?

Table 3 presents the results for items 20-26 which were used to answer research question 3. The survey instrument asked for perceptions of seven levels of conflict. The levels examined were disagreements, verbal attacks, threats and intimidation, personal space invasions, physical contacts, physical attacks, and attacks with weapons.

The results of survey instrument item 20 (How often do students see disagreements?) indicated most of the time or always was the response of 40% of the total respondents. The students of Mary Miller Junior High School selected most of the time or always at a much higher percentage than staff or parents. This frequency was selected by 62% of the students, 16% of the staff, and 14% of the parents. Results for the same item indicated little of the time or never was selected by 9% of the students, 20% of the staff, 51% of the parents, and 26% of the total respondents.

Only 6% of the students reported seeing verbal attacks (survey instrument item 21) little of the time or never. Most of the time or always was the response of 75% of the students. Just 18% of the staff and parents responded students saw verbal attacks most of the time or always. Forty-one percent of the parents believed students saw verbal attacks little of the time or never.

The results of survey instrument item 22 (How often do students see threats and intimidation?) indicated 53% of the staff believed students saw threats and intimidation little of the time or never, while 50% of the students claimed most of the time or always. Sixty-one percent of the parents said their children saw threats and intimidation little of the time or never as compared to 18% of the students and 53% of the staff.

The results of survey instrument item 23 (How often do students see personal space invasions?) indicated the students of Mary Miller Junior High School saw personal

Table 3

Results For Students, Staff, Parents and all Groups Combined Items 20-26

| Respondent | Never    |          | Little   |          | Sometimes |          | Most     |          | Always   |          |
|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups     | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u>  | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> |

How Often Do Students See Disagreements? Item 20

|          |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|----------|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Students | 2  | 1% | 24  | 8%  | 85  | 29% | 83  | 28% | 99  | 34% |
| Staff    | 1  | 2% | 8   | 18% | 29  | 64% | 7   | 16% | 0   | 0%  |
| Parents  | 17 | 8% | 86  | 43% | 69  | 34% | 20  | 10% | 9   | 4%  |
| Total    | 20 | 4% | 118 | 22% | 183 | 34% | 110 | 20% | 108 | 20% |

How Often Do Students See Verbal Attacks? Item 21

|          |    |     |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|----------|----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Students | 2  | 1%  | 14 | 5%  | 57  | 19% | 85  | 29% | 135 | 46% |
| Staff    | 0  | 0%  | 11 | 24% | 26  | 58% | 8   | 18% | 0   | 0%  |
| Parents  | 37 | 18% | 47 | 23% | 81  | 40% | 28  | 14% | 8   | 4%  |
| Total    | 39 | 7%  | 72 | 13% | 164 | 30% | 121 | 22% | 143 | 27% |

How Often Do Students See Threats and Intimidation? Item 22

|          |    |     |     |     |     |     |    |     |    |     |
|----------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|
| Students | 3  | 1%  | 51  | 17% | 94  | 32% | 73 | 25% | 72 | 25% |
| Staff    | 1  | 2%  | 23  | 51% | 20  | 44% | 1  | 2%  | 0  | 0%  |
| Parents  | 49 | 24% | 74  | 37% | 51  | 25% | 11 | 5%  | 16 | 8%  |
| Total    | 53 | 9%  | 148 | 27% | 165 | 31% | 85 | 16% | 88 | 16% |

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

| Respondent   | Never    |          | Little   |          | Sometimes |          | Most     |          | Always   |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups   | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u>  | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> |
| <u>How Often Do Students See Personal Space Invasions? Item 23</u> |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students   | 16       | 5%       | 60       | 20%      | 102       | 35%      | 66       | 23%      | 49       | 17%      |
| Staff  | 4        | 9%       | 18       | 40%      | 21        | 47%      | 2        | 4%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents  | 49       | 24%      | 80       | 40%      | 48        | 24%      | 21       | 10%      | 3        | 1%       |
| Total  | 69       | 13%      | 158      | 29%      | 171       | 32%      | 89       | 17%      | 52       | 10%      |
| <u>How Often Do Students See Physical Contacts? Item 24</u>        |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students   | 7        | 2%       | 51       | 17%      | 108       | 37%      | 67       | 23%      | 60       | 20%      |
| Staff  | 2        | 4%       | 17       | 38%      | 22        | 49%      | 4        | 9%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents  | 63       | 31%      | 76       | 38%      | 38        | 19%      | 21       | 10%      | 3        | 1%       |
| Total  | 72       | 13%      | 144      | 27%      | 168       | 31%      | 92       | 17%      | 63       | 12%      |
| <u>How Often Do Students See Physical Attacks? Item 25</u>         |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students   | 22       | 8%       | 95       | 32%      | 102       | 35%      | 41       | 14%      | 33       | 11%      |
| Staff  | 8        | 18%      | 25       | 56%      | 12        | 37%      | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents  | 111      | 55%      | 40       | 20%      | 32        | 16%      | 15       | 7%       | 3        | 1%       |
| Total  | 141      | 26%      | 160      | 30%      | 146       | 27%      | 56       | 10%      | 36       | 7%       |

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

| Respondent   | Never    |          | Little   |          | Sometimes |          | Most     |          | Always   |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Groups   | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u>  | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>n</u> | <u>%</u> |
| <u>How Often Do Students See Attacks With Weapons? Item 26</u> |          |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Students   | 212      | 72%      | 55       | 19%      | 19        | 6%       | 4        | 1%       | 3        | 1%       |
| Staff  | 35       | 78%      | 9        | 20%      | 1         | 2%       | 0        | 0%       | 0        | 0%       |
| Parents  | 167      | 83%      | 17       | 8%       | 6         | 3%       | 10       | 5%       | 1        | 0%       |
| Total  | 414      | 77%      | 81       | 15%      | 26        | 5%       | 14       | 3%       | 4        | 1%       |

Note. n = the number of responses. Percents do not total 100% due to rounding.

space invasions more often than staff members or parents perceived. Most of the time or always was selected by 40% of the students, 4% of the staff, 11% of the parents, and 27% of the total respondent group. While 25% of the students reported they saw personal space invasions little of time or never, 49% of the staff and 64% of the parents selected the same response.

Perceptions also differed in regard to physical contacts (survey instrument item 24). Results for this item indicated 19% of the students saw physical contacts little of the time or never. The similar staff perception was 42% while 69% of the parents responded the same. Forty-three percent of the students, 9% of the staff, and 11% of the parents reported students saw physical contacts most of the time or always.

The results of survey instrument item 25 (How often do students see physical attacks?) indicated students did not see physical attacks often at Mary Miller Junior High School. Little of the time or never was selected by 40% of the students, 74% of the staff, 75% of the parents, and 56% of the overall respondents. Only 25% of the students, 8% of the parents, and 0% of the staff members selected most of the time or always.

Attacks with weapons (survey instrument item 26) rarely happened in this building. Never was selected by 72% of the students, 78% of the staff, and 83% of the parents. Little of the time was chosen by 19% of the students, 20% of the staff, and 8% of the parents.

In summation, the perceptions of the students, staff, and parents of Mary Miller Junior High School regarding the various levels of conflict indicated that perceptions differed in regards to disagreements, verbal attacks, and threats and intimidation. Students perceived these levels of conflict occurring most of the time or always while staff members and parents perceived them to occur little of the time or sometimes. The students reported personal space invasions and physical contacts occurring most of the time while staff members and parents reported little of the time. While students perceived physical attacks sometimes, staff members and parents reported little of the time or never. The students, staff, and parents of Mary Miller Junior High School agreed that attacks with weapons occurred never or little of the time.

## Chapter 5

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Summary

This study investigated the perceptions of students, staff, and parents regarding conflict at Mary Miller Junior High School. The researcher (Assistant Principal at Mary Miller Junior High School) believed that, based on recent national happenings regarding school violence, it was important to assess the environment at Mary Miller Junior High School to identify if any problems might exist regarding safety at school. The researcher felt that feedback from students, staff and parents would help in planning to insure the school environment was safe and likely to be conducive to learning.

The specific research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of students, staff, and parents regarding conflict and school climate at Mary Miller Junior High School?
2. What are the perceptions of students, staff, and parents regarding the motives for conflicts (disagreements) at Mary Miller Junior High School?
3. What are the perceptions of students, staff, and parents regarding various levels of conflict at Mary Miller Junior High School?

This field study, conducted during the spring of 1998, was based on data collected from a survey of 293 students, 45 staff members, and 201 parents of Mary Miller Junior High School. A survey, based on a review of national issues from literature pertaining to school climate and conflicts within schools, was designed by the researcher to determine perceptions regarding conflict and school climate, the motives for conflict (disagreements), and the frequency of various levels of conflict. The researcher



administered the survey instrument to staff members at their monthly meeting. Staff members were given instructions and then monitored the students as they completed their survey instruments during their home room period. Survey instruments were given to the students to take home to their parents. The students returned the parent survey instruments to their home room teachers.

The responses of the survey instrument were entered into a computer data file. Filters were generated from the gathered data, and results were displayed. Descriptive analysis using frequencies and percentages were used to present the results. An analysis of the data was presented through the use of tables and accompanied by narratives.

Results for research question 1 indicated the students, staff, and parents of Mary Miller Junior High School stated that students felt safe from violence, but expressed a concern relating to verbal abuse. Although fights sometimes occurred in this building, weapons were of little concern. The students reported that discipline problems occurred most often in the halls. The staff reported the cafeteria was the specific location in this building where student discipline problems most often occurred, and the parents responded the classroom had the greatest discipline problems. The student perception was that students in this building did not handle conflicts peacefully; staff members and parents disagreed. The principal and assistant principal of Mary Miller Junior High School did a good job with discipline. It was the consensus of the respondents that the students of Mary Miller Junior High School felt proud to be a part of this building.

Results for research question 2 revealed the leading cause of conflict to be rumors or gossip. The second rated cause of conflict appeared to be damaged or lost personal property. The overall perceptions of conflicts starting because of student/teacher

problems or boyfriend/girlfriend problems were nearly identical, however the students appeared to be more concerned than staff or parents with regard to these conflicts.

Results for research question 3 showed that perceptions differ in regards to disagreements, verbal attacks, and threats and intimidation. Students perceived these levels of conflict occurring most of the time or always, while staff members and parents perceived little of the time or sometimes. The students reported personal space invasions and physical contacts occurring most of the time, while staff members and parents reported little of the time. While students perceived physical attacks sometimes, staff members and parents reported little of the time or never. The students, staff, and parents of Mary Miller Junior High School agreed that attacks with weapons occurred never or little of the time.

### Conclusions

Based on the results of research questions 1, 2, and 3, it was the conclusion of the researcher that Mary Miller Junior High School was a pretty good place to be. The school environment was safe and conducive to learning. The perceptions of students, staff, and parents differed on the amount of conflict at Mary Miller Junior High School. The students' perceptions of fighting, physical harm, and verbal abuse were noticeably different from that of staff and parents. Discipline problems in the cafeteria, hallways, and classrooms presented a concern among all respondent groups.

The students of Mary Miller Junior High School were not perceived as having the skills necessary to handle conflicts peacefully. Fights did not appear to be a concern for many Mary Miller Junior High School students, and nearly 54% of the students felt safe from physical harm most of the time or always. Students did not feel safe from verbal

abuse in the building. The climate of Mary Miller Junior High School was considered to be good for learning most of the time or always and the students appeared to be proud to be a part of the building.. The Assistant Principal and Principal did a good job of discipline as reported by the students, staff, and parents.

The number one motive for conflict at Mary Miller Junior High School appeared to be rumors or gossip. When viewing the various levels of conflict in this building, disagreements and verbal attacks appeared to occur most often.

### Recommendations

Administrators, teachers, parents, students, law enforcement, and community leaders all want to keep schools safe and free from the fear and aftermath of violence so that learning can occur. Students cannot learn in an environment of fear, and they have the right to be educated in a safe educational setting. Because schools were not initially designed to prevent crime, violence, and the presence of guns or other weapons, school administrators, staff, and law enforcement officials must continually work to make this and other schools safe.

It is the researcher's recommendation that the program of peer mediation and conflict resolution be strengthened at Mary Miller Junior High School. Students would then increase the skills necessary to handle conflicts peacefully. It is also recommended that all students attend both large and small group sessions to reinforce the school district's policies as stated in the Student and Parent Handbook. Staff members should be reminded of the importance of their hall supervision during the passing periods between classes.

The issue of a healthy school climate is a shared concern. Today, more than ever, it is essential that communities, businesses, parents, and students work together to develop a disciplined environment where learning can take place. Achieving this objective requires school and community leaders to assess where they are, plan where they want to be, implement a series of comprehensive strategies to bridge the difference, and finally evaluate their progress. Georgetown-Ridge Farm Community Unit School District #4 currently has many pieces in place. It is the researcher's recommendation that Mary Miller Junior High School form a Discipline Committee composed of staff and administrators for monthly evaluations of the discipline concerns in the building. It is also recommended that a district-wide Ownership in Education Committee be formed which would meet several times each year to evaluate the policies and expectations of student behavior. This committee should be composed of students, staff, administrators, and parents.

Students are one of the keys in the development of a positive school climate. If we consider them part of the problem, we must also make them part of the solution. One of the best ways to do that is to open the lines of communication between adults and students. Students are a valuable source of information, and are often aware that a negative situation is brewing.

The researcher recommends that the survey instrument used for this field study be revisited every few years for perception comparisons. Mary Miller Junior High School could then measure the progress toward developing an environment where improved learning can take place.

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**Appendix A**  
**Georgetown-Ridge Farm Schools**  
**Junior High School Student Climate Survey**

This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions. No one in your school will see your answers. Do not put your name on this paper. Please follow the directions.

**Directions:** Think about only this building when you answer. Use the code to the right. Circle the letter that best tells about your experiences in this building.

**Code**

**N = Never**

**L = Little of the time**

**S = Sometimes**

**M = Most of the time**

**A = Always**

**Part I Locations of conflict**

|     |  | Never | Little | Sometimes | Most | Always |
|-----|--|-------|--------|-----------|------|--------|
| 1.  | I feel safe from violence in this building   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 2.  | Student discipline problems occur in the halls   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 3.  | The climate in this building is good for learning  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 4.  | Students in this building handle conflicts (disagreements) peacefully                                | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 5.  | The principal and assistant principal in this building do a good job with discipline                 | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 6.  | Student discipline problems occur in the cafeteria   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 7.  | Students in this building are violent (use power or physical force to cause damage, abuse or injury) | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 8.  | I feel proud to be a student in this school  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 9.  | Student discipline problems occur on the bus   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 10. | Fights among students occur in this building   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 11. | Student discipline problems occur in classrooms  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 12. | Student discipline problems occur while walking to or from school                                    | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 13. | Students have had weapons in this building   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 14. | I feel safe from physical harm in this building  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 15. | I feel safe from verbal abuse in this building   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |



**Code**

N = Never

L = Little of the time

S = Sometimes

M = Most of the time

A = Always

**Part II Conflicts (disagreements) for students in this building start because of:**

| because of: |                                   | Never | Sometimes |   | Always |   |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|-------|-----------|---|--------|---|
|             |                                   |       | Little    |   | Most   |   |
| 16.         | Rumors or gossip                  | N     | L         | S | M      | A |
| 17.         | Damaged or lost personal property | N     | L         | S | M      | A |
| 18.         | Boyfriend / girlfriend problems   | N     | L         | S | M      | A |
| 19.         | Student / teacher problems        | N     | L         | S | M      | A |

**Part III How often do you see the following in this building?**

| following in this building? |   | Never | Sometimes |   | Always |   |
|-----------------------------|---|-------|-----------|---|--------|---|
|                             |   |       | Little    |   | Most   |   |
| 20.                         | Disagreements (arguments, disputes, quarrels)                                 | N     | L         | S | M      | A |
| 21.                         | Verbal attacks (name-calling, put downs, teasing)                             | N     | L         | S | M      | A |
| 22.                         | Threats and intimidation (making threats or using size to intimidate)         | N     | L         | S | M      | A |
| 23.                         | Personal space invasion (getting "in your face" or "in your space")           | N     | L         | S | M      | A |
| 24.                         | Physical contact (pushing, shoving)   | N     | L         | S | M      | A |
| 25.                         | Physical attack (hitting, punching, slapping)                                 | N     | L         | S | M      | A |
| 26.                         | Attack with a weapon (using a gun, knife, or object to attack another person) | N     | L         | S | M      | A |

**Part IV Identification and gender**

|     |        |                 |                 |                 |
|-----|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 27. | I am a | grade 6 student | grade 7 student | grade 8 student |
| 28. | I am a | male            | female          |                 |

Thank you for providing your opinions



**Appendix B**  
**Georgetown-Ridge Farm Schools**  
**Junior High School Student Climate Survey**

This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions. No one in your school will see your answers. Do not put your name on this paper. Please follow the directions.

**Directions:** Think about only this building when you answer. Use the code to the right. Circle the letter that best tells about your experiences (**during the last 2 years**) in this building.

**Code**

**N = Never**

**L = Little of the time**

**S = Sometimes**

**M = Most of the time**

**A = Always**

**Part I Locations of conflict**

|     |  | Never | Little | Sometimes | Most | Always |
|-----|--|-------|--------|-----------|------|--------|
| 1.  | Students feel safe from violence in this building  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 2.  | Student discipline problems occur in the halls   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 3.  | The climate in this building is good for learning  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 4.  | Students in this building handle conflicts (disagreements) peacefully                                | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 5.  | The principal and assistant principal in this building do a good job with discipline                 | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 6.  | Student discipline problems occur in the cafeteria   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 7.  | Students in this building are violent (use power or physical force to cause damage, abuse or injury) | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 8.  | Students feel proud to be a part of this school  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 9.  | Student discipline problems occur on the bus   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 10. | Fights among students occur in this building   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 11. | Student discipline problems occur in classrooms  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 12. | Student discipline problems occur while walking to or from school                                    | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 13. | Students have had weapons in this building   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 14. | Students feel safe from physical harm in MMJHS   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 15. | Students feel safe from verbal abuse in MMJHS  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |

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over

Code

N = Never

L = Little of the time

S = Sometimes

M = Most of the time

A = Always

**Part II Conflicts (disagreements) for students in this building start because of:**

|     |                                   | Never | Sometimes |      | Always |   |
|-----|-----------------------------------|-------|-----------|------|--------|---|
|     |                                   |       | Little    | Most |        |   |
| 16. | Rumors or gossip                  | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |
| 17. | Damaged or lost personal property | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |
| 18. | Boyfriend / girlfriend problems   | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |
| 19. | Student / teacher problems        | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |

**Part III How often do you see the following in this building? (Among students)**

|     |   | Never | Sometimes |      | Always |   |
|-----|---|-------|-----------|------|--------|---|
|     |   |       | Little    | Most |        |   |
| 20. | Disagreements (arguments, disputes, quarrels)                                 | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |
| 21. | Verbal attacks (name-calling, put downs, teasing)                             | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |
| 22. | Threats and intimidation (making threats or using size to intimidate)         | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |
| 23. | Personal space invasion (getting "in your face" or "in your space")           | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |
| 24. | Physical contact (pushing, shoving)   | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |
| 25. | Physical attack (hitting, punching, slapping)                                 | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |
| 26. | Attack with a weapon (using a gun, knife, or object to attack another person) | N     | L         | S    | M      | A |

**Part IV Identification and gender**

|     |           |                        |                               |
|-----|-----------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 27. | I am a(n) | certified staff member | educational support personnel |
| 28. | I am a    | male                   | female                        |

**Thank you for providing your opinions**

**Appendix C**  
**Georgetown-Ridge Farm Schools**  
**Junior High School Student Climate Survey**

This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions. No one in your school will see your answers. Do not put your name on this paper. Please follow the directions.

**Directions:** Think about only this building when you answer. Use the code to the right. Circle the letter that best tells about the experiences of your child presently enrolled in this building. If you cannot answer a question, leave it blank.

**Code**  
**N = Never**  
**L = Little of the time**  
**S = Sometimes**  
**M = Most of the time**  
**A = Always**

**Part I Locations of conflict**

|     |  | Never | Little | Sometimes | Most | Always |
|-----|--|-------|--------|-----------|------|--------|
| 1.  | My child feels safe from violence in this building   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 2.  | Student discipline problems occur in the halls   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 3.  | The climate in this building is good for learning  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 4.  | Students in this building handle conflicts (disagreements) peacefully                                | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 5.  | The principal and assistant principal in this building do a good job with discipline                 | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 6.  | Student discipline problems occur in the cafeteria   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 7.  | Students in this building are violent (use power or physical force to cause damage, abuse or injury) | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 8.  | My child feels proud to be a part of this school   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 9.  | Student discipline problems occur on the bus   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 10. | Fights among students occur in this building   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 11. | Student discipline problems occur in classrooms  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 12. | Student discipline problems occur while walking to or from school                                    | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 13. | Students have had weapons in this building   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 14. | My child feels safe from physical harm in MMJHS  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 15. | My child feels safe from verbal abuse in MMJHS   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |

Code

N = Never

L = Little of the time

S = Sometimes

M = Most of the time

A = Always

**Part II Conflicts (disagreements) for  
my child in this building start  
because of:**

|     |                                   | Never | Little | Sometimes | Most | Always |
|-----|-----------------------------------|-------|--------|-----------|------|--------|
| 16. | Rumors or gossip                  | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 17. | Damaged or lost personal property | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 18. | Boyfriend / girlfriend problems   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 19. | Student / teacher problems        | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |

**Part III How often does your child  
experience the following with  
other students in this building?**

|     |   | Never | Little | Sometimes | Most | Always |
|-----|---|-------|--------|-----------|------|--------|
| 20. | Disagreements (arguments, disputes, quarrels)                                 | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 21. | Verbal attacks (name-calling, put downs, teasing)                             | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 22. | Threats and intimidation (making threats or using size to intimidate)         | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 23. | Personal space invasion (getting "in your face" or "in your space")           | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 24. | Physical contact (pushing, shoving)   | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 25. | Physical attack (hitting, punching, slapping)                                 | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |
| 26. | Attack with a weapon (using a gun, knife, or object to attack another person) | N     | L      | S         | M    | A      |

**Part IV Identification and gender**

|     |        |        |             |          |
|-----|--------|--------|-------------|----------|
| 27. | I am a | parent | grandparent | guardian |
| 28. | I am a | male   | female      |          |

Thank you for providing your opinions