

Bullying Prevention for Safer Schools

Practical Tips for Prevention, Intervention, and Ongoing Support

Bullying not only affects the immediate well-being of students but also contributes to long-term challenges in school safety and climate if left unaddressed. By taking proactive steps in prevention, intervention, and ongoing support, educators can reduce harm, foster positive relationships, and build a school environment where every student feels safe, valued, and respected.

Bullying Prevention Month

Since October is National Bullying Prevention Month, it is a great time to discuss bullying with students. The questions below can help begin these discussions.

- What does bullying look like to you?
- How do you think bullying makes someone feel?
- Why do you think people choose to bully?
- Who are adults that you trust to tell if you are being bullied?
- If you were being bullied, what would you want others to do to support you?
- What are some things we can do as a class or school to make everyone feel included?
- If you were being bullied, what would you want others to do to support you?



Bullying Prevention Methods

- **Help students understand bullying** – Discuss what bullying is and how to stand up to bullies safely. Make sure students know that bullying is unacceptable and how to get help.
- **Promote open communication** – Check in with students often, and listen to their needs. Provide times for students to bring up concerns.
- **Encourage students to do what they love** – Activities, interests, and clubs can boost a student's confidence and help them make friends. This can help protect students from bullying behavior and isolation.
- **Model how to treat others** – Students may imitate how you treat others so treating your students and other adults with kindness and respect can have a significant impact.



Intervening in a Bullying Incident

Steps to Take

If you see an active bullying incident, follow these steps:

- ☐ Intervene immediately. Get another staff member to help if necessary.
- ☐ Separate the students involved.
- ☐ Make sure everyone is safe.
- ☐ Identify any immediate medical or mental health needs.
- ☐ Contact a nurse or counselor if necessary.
- ☐ Stay calm. Reassure any of the students involved.
- ☐ Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

Call an SRO or nurse immediately if:

- A weapon is involved.
- There are threats of serious physical injury.
- There are threats of hate-motivated violence, such as racism.
- There is serious bodily harm.
- There is sexual abuse.
- Anyone is accused of an illegal act, such as robbery.

Meeting with the Students

- Keep all the involved students separate.
- Get the story from several sources, including both students and adults.
- Listen without blaming.
- Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.

Determining if an incident is bullying

- What is the history between the students involved?
- Have there been past conflicts or incidents?
- What kind of relationship do the students have?
- Is the student worried it will happen again?

Common Mistakes

- ✗ Ignoring the incident
- ✗ Assuming the students will work it out on their own
- ✗ Immediately trying to find out the facts
- ✗ Forcing other students to say publicly what they saw
- ✗ Questioning the students involved in front of other students
- ✗ Talking to the students involved together
- ✗ Making the students involved apologize immediately



Supporting Bullied Students

Do:



Assure the student that the bullying is not their fault. This reassurance helps reduce shame and self-blame.



Encourage the student to walk away from the situation if it is safe to do so and to immediately report the incident to a trusted adult.



Work with other staff and families to resolve the situation and protect the bullied student. Continue with follow up support after bullying has been resolved.



Listen and focus on the student. Commit to making the bullying stop and consistently support the bullied student.

Don't:



Blame the student for being bullied. Even if they provoked the bullying, no one deserves to be bullied.



Tell the child to physically fight back against the kid who is bullying. This could get the student hurt, suspended, or expelled.



Have the parents of the bullied student contact the parents of the bully. This could make matters worse. If needed, have school staff mediate.



Tell the student to ignore the bullying. This may cause the bullying to continue or worsen.

Questions to Ask the Student

What can I do right now to support you?

Who do you feel most comfortable talking to if this happens again?

What's the hardest part of this situation for you?

What would make you feel safe at school?

Addressing the Bully's Behavior



Step 1: Identify and address behavior.

- Clearly explain what behavior is the problem.
- Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated.
- Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.

Step 2: Understand the why.

- Talk through possible reasons that the student bullied, such as trying to fit in, issues at home, or being bullied themselves.
- Keep the tone open and supportive.

Step 3: Utilize consequences to teach.

- Focus on learning over punishment.
- Possible ideas include having the student write an apology letter or do a good deed for the bullied student.

Step 4: Make amends.

- Guide the student in repairing the harm they caused.
- Reinforce how their actions affect others.
- Encourage empathy and accountability.

Step 5: Follow up with support.

- Praise acts of kindness.
- Discuss what it means to be a good friend.
- Maintain ongoing check-ins.

To view the resources used for this guide and more information,
go to <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>.