What Can Be Done About Name-Calling and Bullying

Working with Students

- Provide students with opportunities to develop cooperative learning and conflict resolution skills, both as independent opportunities and as part of routine instructional methods.

- Provide students who engage in bullying behaviors with opportunities to discuss these behaviors with counseling staff and to develop more effective strategies for managing peer relationships.

- Avoid focusing efforts to eliminate bullying on a few student offenders. Understand and communicate the expectations for all members of the school population to participate in creating positive change. Those people not directly involved in bullying are often bystanders who can become active allies by supporting those targeted by bullying.

- Implement strategies to increase student reporting of bullying. Secure “share boxes” or create a specific email address where students can leave anonymous notes for administrative staff about incidents or problems that occur in the school.

- Offer an “ally-building” course for students to strengthen their skills, teach techniques to prevent or respond to future incidents and build self-esteem.

- Engage students in a campaign to develop a school motto that communicates a commitment to address bullying, e.g., “All students should
feel safe in all areas of the school at all times.”

- Organize a team or club for students to take action against name-calling and bullying and to develop skills to be allies to targeted students, e.g., “friendship groups.”
- Help students develop informal ways to build peer support.
- Develop a system to reinforce pro-social behavior, e.g., “Caught you caring” or “good deed stars,” which are especially effective for younger students.

What Can Individual School Staff Do?

- Do not let incidents of bullying or harassment occur in your presence without taking action.
- Do not assume you know the needs of the person being targeted by bullying. Ask and be responsive to the target’s needs.
- Never blame the target. Reinforce that the incident is not the target’s fault.
- Never tell a target to ignore the harassment.
- Encourage students who are directly involved or who witness incidents of name-calling and bullying to talk to you or another adult staff. Establish safe spaces for communication and listen before responding.
- Set a good example with your own behavior in and out of the classroom. Don’t use sarcasm, mean-spirited humor or other behaviors that could be misconstrued as bullying by students.
- Use anti-bias curriculum that promotes respect, fairness and cooperative learning.
- Add to your core curricula, lessons and activities that build empathy and promote anger management, conflict resolution and communication skills.
- Develop an anti-bias learning environment by selecting curriculum and resources that promote diversity and respect for differences.
Teach students the difference between being assertive and being aggressive.

Be a role model and mentor.

Develop a classroom action plan to ensure that students know what to do when they observe an incident of name-calling or bullying.

Work with students to develop ground rules for your classroom.

Help students to develop skills to become allies to other students.

Recognize and reward ally behaviors when you see them.

What Can Students Do?

Talk to an adult about what you are experiencing or witnessing.

Join or start a club that promotes diversity and respect.

Join or start a club that stands up for students who are targets of bullying and against bullying behaviors.

Be an ally to targeted students.

Build a team of peer supporters.

Befriend a shy student.

Offer words of kindness and support to targets of bullying.

Speak out against biased or bullying behaviors you witness.

Help fellow students move from being bystanders to taking action.

Express disapproval of bullying behavior by not joining in the laughter or teasing and by refusing to spread rumors or gossip.

Be a role model.

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