

Identity-Based Bullying

| Grade Level | | Time | Common Core Standards |
|-------------|-----|------------------|--|
| K-2 | 3-5 | 45–60 Minutes | Writing: W3, W4 Speaking & Listening: SL1 |
| MS | HS | | |



Web Related Connections

Lessons

[Words That Heal: Using Children's Literature to Address Bullying](#)
[Cyberbullying: Understanding and Addressing Online Cruelty](#)

Other Resources

[Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Strategies and Resources](#)
[Books about Bullying & Name-Calling](#)

Key Words

(See ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).)

aggressor
 ally
 bullying
 bystander
 gender
 identity
 name-calling
 nationality
 prejudice
 race
 religion
 stereotype
 target

LESSON OVERVIEW

Bullying is a major problem in our schools. When it targets aspects of a person's identity, it is called identity-based bullying, and it may include bias about appearance, race, culture, gender and gender expression, language, religion, socioeconomic status, disability and sexual orientation. According to GLSEN's 2012 report *Playground and Prejudice: Elementary School Climate in the United States*, two-thirds of elementary students attribute the bullying and name-calling that they witness to students' appearance or body size. Bullying and name-calling are attributed to not being good at sports 37% of the time. And being a boy who acts or looks "too much like a girl" or a girl who acts or looks "too much like a boy" accounts for bullying for 23% of students. Teachers report similar results.

This elementary/middle school lesson will help students define and understand identity-based bullying, reflect on experiences they have had and analyze scenarios and come up with potential solutions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify important aspects of identity.
- Students will be able to define bullying and identity-based bullying.
- Students will understand the connection between identity and bullying.
- Students will share examples of identity-based bullying.
- Students will explore how to deal with identity-based bullying by reading, writing and discussing scenarios.

MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- [Roles in Bullying Incidents](#) (for teacher)
- [Scenario Worksheets #1–5](#) (one per group)
- Chart paper and markers

CLASSROOM GUIDELINES

If you have already set up classroom guidelines, review them. Because this lesson is about prejudice, identity and bullying, it is particularly important to go over terminology and remind students not to engage in stereotyping and name-calling, to listen well and to respect other points of view.

If you do not already have classroom guidelines, write "Classroom Guidelines" on a sheet of chart paper and ask students to suggest behaviors and attitudes

that will help everyone feel safe and that will promote a respectful discussion. Allow a few minutes for brainstorming and make sure the following guidelines are on the list:

- Respect each other's points of view.
- Listen to others.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Participate as much as you can (to your level of comfort) and ask questions.
- Respect confidentiality (don't share what others have shared).
- Be open to new ideas.
- Share air time so that everyone who wants to speak has an opportunity to do so.

PROCEDURES

Warm-Up Activity: The Great Wind Blows

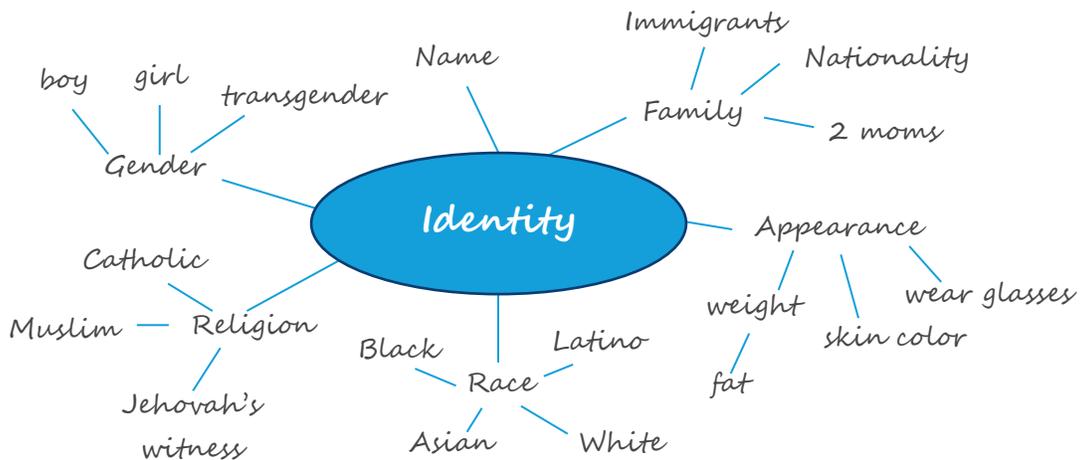
1. Place all the chairs in a circle in the middle of the room and instruct all students to sit in a chair in the circle. Explain to students that they are going to do an activity called "The Great Wind Blows," and the goal is for them to discover some of the differences between them and the similarities they share.
2. Explain that one person will stand in the center of the circle and call out a sentence that begins with, "A great wind blows for everyone who_____." The person in the middle finishes the sentence with a description that fits some, many or all of the students in the circle such as "A great wind blows for everyone who wears glasses." After the sentence is called out, everyone who fits that description leaves their seat and finds another in the circle that has been vacated. The person in the center will also take one of the seats, leaving a new person without a seat. The new person without a seat will now stand in the middle and call out a new description. While in the center, students are free to think up their own descriptors to complete the phrase.
3. Ask for a volunteer to start the activity by standing in the center of the circle. Eliminate her/his chair from the circle. If needed, provide suggested descriptions ("A great wind blows for everyone who is left-handed or is an only child or speaks Spanish."). Continue this process for 10 minutes while interest remains high.
4. After the activity is completed, ask students: *What new things did you learn about your classmates?*

[Alternate Warm-Up Activity]

Read aloud a children's book about identity-based bullying. A list of suggestions is included in the "[Additional Reading and Resources](#)" section.

Defining "Identity"

1. Ask students: *What does the word "identity" mean? What are aspects of your identity?*
2. Define **identity** as the qualities, beliefs, etc. that make a particular person or group different from others.
Share an example using yourself. For example, "My identity includes being Latina, a woman and Catholic." Explain that many things shape a person's identity and help determine who they are.
3. Ask students: *What are different parts of your identity? What does identity consist of?* Record their words, thoughts and phrases using a semantic web as illustrated below. Ask questions to elicit more ideas from the students.



4. After brainstorming, engage students in a large group discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What do you notice about the words and phrases on the web?
 - Are there some things on the web that you had not thought of as being part of identity?
 - Which of these aspects of identity are important to you?

Defining “Bullying”

1. Ask students: *What is bullying?* Allow extended discussion and give this definition:
Bullying is when one person or a group behaves—on purpose and over and over—in ways that make someone feel hurt, afraid or embarrassed.
2. Write the definition on the board or on chart paper.
3. Ask students to share examples of bullying behavior they have seen or heard about. Keep this brief.
4. Explain the difference between name-calling (use of words to hurt or be mean to someone or a group) teasing (to laugh at and criticize someone in a way that is either friendly and playful or cruel and unkind) and bullying. Emphasize that the terms are related as teasing can start off as playful but lead to cruel behavior and bullying and name-calling is often an element of bullying.
5. Ask students: *Based on what you have learned about identity and what you know about bullying, what is identity-based bullying?*
6. Explain that **identity-based bullying** is when someone is bullied based on an aspect of who they are or are perceived to be: their identity. It can also be called “prejudice-based bullying” because the bullying is based on prejudice. Remind students that prejudice is when you make a decision or form an opinion about a person or group of people without sufficient knowledge.
7. Point out to students that they should never blame the target of the bullying. A person is not bullied because she or he is Jewish or gay or blind. That person is bullied because others are biased against that group. For example, bullying a boy who is blind is not because the boy is blind; it is because others are prejudiced against him because of his blindness.

Turn and Talk: A Time I Was Bullied Based on My Identity

Explain to students that they are to talk in pairs about a time they were bullied based on their identity. Using the definitions above, have students think of a time they were a target of identity-based bullying. If they can't think of an example, they can share an example that they witnessed or heard about from a friend or family member. Give

students 3–5 minutes per person to share. Instruct students to share (1) what happened, (2) how they felt and (3) what they did or wanted to do about it.

When finished talking in pairs, ask if a few students want to share their examples with the class.



Small Group Discussion: Identity-Based Bullying Scenarios

This activity involves students reading scenarios about identity-based bullying and analyzing them. If the particular scenarios do not resonate with your students or they hit too “close to home,” feel free to substitute them with scenarios of your own. Review definitions of bullying, target, ally and bystander.

1. Divide students into five groups. Explain that they are to choose one person to be the recorder to write their responses. Distribute a different [Scenario Worksheet](#) to each group. For younger students, you may want to read the scenario aloud to ensure that students understand it.
2. Instruct the small groups to read their scenarios, discuss them and complete the worksheet by answering the questions. Allow 10–15 minutes for this process.
3. When students have completed their small group work, instruct them to come back to the larger group and have all the groups present their findings to the class.
4. Engage students in a large group discussion by asking the following questions:
 - How was it to work in your small group?
 - Did you discover anything new about bullying and specifically identity-based bullying?
 - What were some of the solutions or actions you came up with for dealing with the bullying?



Writing Activity: Create Your Own Scenarios

1. Explain to students that they will be writing their own scenarios with an action step at the end. Have students think about all the situations of identity-based bullying that they discussed together, including what they shared and the written scenarios they discussed in small groups.
2. Instruct students to write about a situation of identity-based bullying that they know about first hand or create a new one. Explain that they should include what happened, make clear the bias or targeted identity and then come up with one way in which an ally stepped in and helped. The ally could be another student, a teacher, a friend/family member or the school administration. Younger students can illustrate their story.

Explain to students that the scenarios they write cannot include names or specific details of a real-life incident of bullying. The scenarios can be written as “realistic fiction” which means they can be based on real-life situations, but they cannot include names of students in your class or school or details about the scenario that would disclose a real-life incident. This will help to defuse a situation where feelings about past incidents come to the surface and cause the lesson to get derailed.

Alternative: Assign this writing activity for homework.

3. When students complete their scenarios, ask a few to share aloud with the rest of the class. If time permits, have everyone read their scenarios aloud.

Closing

Have students think about everything they learned in the lesson. Go around the room and have each student complete the following sentence out loud: “The way I can be an ally to someone who is targeted through identity-based bullying is _____.”

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- [Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary School Climate in the United States](#) (GLSEN)

- [Young Children's Biases are Reflected in Bullying Behaviors](#) (Michigan State University Extension)
- [Children's Books about Identity-Based Bullying](#) (ADL)
- *Bullying in North American Schools* by Dorothy Espelage and Susan Swearer
- *Bullying Prevention and Intervention: Realistic Strategies for Schools* by Susan Swearer, Dorothy Espelage and Scott Napolitano

Common Core Standards

| CONTENT AREA/STANDARD |
|---|
| Writing |
| W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences. |
| W4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. |
| Speaking and Listening |
| SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. |

Roles in Bullying Incidents

Ally

Someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied.

Bullying

When one person or a group behaves—on purpose and over and over— in ways that make someone feel hurt, afraid or embarrassed.

Bystander

Someone who sees bullying happening and does not say or do anything.

Aggressor

Someone who says or does hurtful things to another person on purpose and over and over.

Target

Someone who is bullied or treated in hurtful ways by a person or a group on purpose and over and over.

