

No Place for Hate® Activity Library

Bias + Bullying = Identity-Based Bullying

Lesson Plan and Overview

Lesson Plan: [Identity-Based Bullying](#)

Bullying is one of the ways that bias manifests in schools. When the bullying behavior targets an aspect of someone's identity, it is called identity-based bullying. This means the bullying is based on prejudice or bias about the target's identity (e.g., appearance, race, culture, gender, religion, etc.). Because identity-based bullying targets a core part of who the person is—their identity—it can be especially harmful not only to that person but others around them who identify in the same way or who worry that their identity group may be the next target. This lesson plan is designed to help young students navigate this challenging topic, and to learn strategies to address identity-based bullying.

Grade Level

Grades K-5

Note: For each section of the activity, there are indicated variations for students in grades K-2.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Unpack what identity is and reflect on aspects of their and others' identities.
- Consider the connection between bullying, bias and identity.
- Explore what identity-based bullying means and how to address it.

Materials Needed

- A book about bullying awareness and prevention.
 - [Lunch Every Day](#) by Kathryn Otoshi, [I Walk with Vanessa](#) by Kerascoët, [Each Kindness](#) by Jacqueline Woodson or [I Talk Like a River](#) by Jordan Scott and Sydney Smith.
 - Or consider one from a list like [Doing Good Together's Picture Books About Bullies](#), [Bystanders](#) and [Being Kind](#).
- [Two Sides of Me handout](#) (1 copy for each student)

Words You Might Use

- **Allyship:** Being an ally means noticing when someone is being treated badly (through name-calling, exclusion or bullying) and doing something safe and kind to help, even if you don't personally know the person being targeted.

Words You Might Use

- **Bias:** An inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment. Bias can be conscious (explicit or overt and intentional) or unconscious (implicit or unintentional and based on assumptions and “norms”), but both are potentially harmful regardless of intent.
- **Bullying:** Repeated actions or threats of action directed toward a person by one or more people who have (or are perceived to have) more power or status than their target in order to cause fear, distress or harm.
- **Identity:** The qualities and beliefs that make a particular person or group different from others.
- **Prejudice:** Judging or having an idea about someone or a group of people before you actually know them. Prejudice is often directed toward people in a certain identity group (race, religion, gender, etc.).
- **Teasing:** Laughing at and putting someone down in a way that is either friendly and playful or mean and unkind.

Core Activity

If possible, begin the activity by reading aloud a picture book such as [*Lunch Every Day*](#) by Kathryn Otoshi, [*I Walk with Vanessa*](#) by Kerascoët, [*Each Kindness*](#) by Jacqueline Woodson or [*I Talk Like a River*](#) by Jordan Scott and Sydney Smith.

- After reading, ensure students understand the words bullying and allyship.
 - Bullying: *Repeated actions or threats of action directed toward a person by one or more people who have (or are perceived to have) more power or status than their target in order to cause fear, distress or harm.*
 - Allyship: *Being an ally means noticing when someone is being treated badly (through name-calling, exclusion or bullying) and doing something safe and kind to help, even if you don't personally know the person being targeted.*
- Then, engage students in a discussion that delves into bullying, identity-based bullying and allyship.
- Some questions you might ask are:
 - *What happened in the story? Can you tell it in your own words?*
 - *How do you think the character felt when they were being bullied?*
 - *What could the character in the story have done differently?*
 - *If you saw bullying happening, what are some safe ways you could help?*

Core Activity (Continued)

Provide students with the handout: [Two Sides of Me](#). Instruct students that they are going to focus on the first side of the handout. On their handout, explain to students that they are going to think about the main character in the book that they just read.

- For K-2: Ask students to draw on the two halves of their handout. Draw the things (at least 2) that the main character is PROUD of in the story. Draw a time from the story where the main character didn't feel so proud.
- For 3-5: Ask students to write a list from the story of things the main character is proud of in the story, and identify a time in the story where the main character didn't feel so proud.

After students have drawn/written their responses, allow students to share what they brainstormed on their own.

After the book-based discussion, ask students: *What is bullying? How does bullying make the person experiencing it feel? What words or phrases come to mind when you think about bullying?*

- If time allows, as students share words and phrases, create a semantic web with all the words or phrases students use and connect related words/phrases.
- Engage students in a discussion by asking: *What words do you see? How do you feel? Is bullying common or not common? Do we know a lot about bullying?*
- Elicit a definition of bullying as follows: *"when one person or a group of people behaves in ways—on purpose and over and over—that make someone feel hurt, afraid or embarrassed."*
- You can break down each part of the definition to explain in more detail (i.e., one person or group; behaves in ways; on purpose and over and over; makes someone feel hurt, afraid or embarrassed).

Point out to students that they should never blame the target of the bullying; a person is not bullied because of their identity; they are bullied because of prejudice or bias.

- Ask: *How does identity-based bullying make people feel hurt, embarrassed or afraid? Why is it harmful?*
- Elicit responses and explain that when someone is targeted because of their identity, it is extremely hurtful because they are being targeted for who they are, and that they are not valued or appreciated for who they are. It could also make other children feel scared that they will be next.

As a culmination, have students return to their handouts, this time focusing on the other side. Explain to students that now they are going

Core Activity (Continued)

to think about their own experiences and apply the same thinking that they did with the main character from the book they started class with.

- For K-2: Ask students to draw 2 pictures on their handouts. Picture 1 should be a time when they felt PROUD. Picture 2 should be a time when they didn't feel so proud.
- For 3-5: Ask students to write about a time when they felt PROUD, along with a time when they didn't feel so proud.
- After students have had time to write/draw, ask them to share how the experience of thinking about those two different moments felt.

Conclude the lesson by asking students: *Why do you think it's important that we learn about bullying? What can we do to make sure that everyone feels proud of who they are in school?*

Student Leadership Suggestions

How can students in grades 3-5 take more leadership during this lesson?

- **Lead small-group discussions.** Have a small number of students act as "discussion captains" who facilitate the small group sharing portions, asking guiding questions and keeping the group on track and focused.
 - **Co-facilitate the Two Sides of Me activities.** Assign students to share their answers to the Two Sides of Me activities first, modeling vulnerability and openness for their peers.
 - **Mentor younger students.** Students can visit K-2 classes to help lead the lesson and learning for them—from reading books, sharing examples to guiding discussions.
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Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further

NOTE: These additional activities can be done as follow-ups to the core activity and they can also serve as an additional NPFH activity if the core activity is completed first.

- Engage students in discussions about the roles we play in identity-based bullying (target, bystander, aggressor and ally) and emphasize that acting as an ally is a way to do something about the bullying you see or experience. Talk with students about what it means to act as an ally. Hand out and discuss the [6 Ways to Be an Ally](#) handout (available in English and Spanish). Elicit and/or provide examples for each of the six ways as you review the handout. For older students, have them write a short paragraph about a time they acted as an ally in an identity-based bullying incident or saw someone else act as an ally. Younger students can draw a picture or can share verbally.
- Read aloud book(s) about bullying or identity-based bullying (see

Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further (Continued)

above). After reading aloud, have older students (in grades 3-5) create books about bullying to share in classes with younger students. Emphasize ally behaviors that students can write into the story so that the bullying is addressed. Students can look over some picture books that already exist for examples. They should have a younger child (ages 5-7) in mind as they create the book, keeping in mind the following components of a good story: an engaging plot with a story arc, a clear message and theme around identity-based bullying, illustrations that help to tell the story and characters that are diverse and non-stereotypical. When the books are completed, have each upper grade (e.g., grades 3-5) class partner with a lower grade (e.g., grades K-2) class and have the older students read and discuss their books with the younger students.

- As a class or in small groups, have students create videos with a message about identity, bullying and identity-based bullying. As a group or class, you will have to decide on the following components in advance: (1) the message you want to convey, (2) background information for your audience and (3) a concise and inspiring “call to action,” which is what you want the viewers to do. These videos can then be shared with the whole school community in an assembly and/or online.

Note: For all of these activities, make sure students do not use names of specific people or scenarios that reflect a real-life situation of bullying that could potentially hurt, harm or highlight someone or a group of people at their school. While it's helpful to use real-life situations as inspiration for stories, it is important that those scenarios do not disclose names, people or situations that are too close to home.

Home Connection

Share ADL's Table Talk [What Bullying Is and Is Not](#) with families.

How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

Students will reflect on their own identities, engage in discussions about bullying and identity-based bullying and explore what they can do about bullying, including allyship. This will contribute to a classroom and school climate that is more safe, inclusive and respectful.

The Two Sides of Me

Things that make the character feel PROUD.



Things that make the character feel not so PROUD.



The Two Sides of Me

Things that make me feel PROUD.



Things that make me feel not so PROUD.

