

Lesson Plan and Overview

Lesson Plan: Identity-Based Bullying

Bullying is a major issue in our schools today. When the bullying behavior targets aspects of a person's identity, it is called identity-based bullying. This means the incident is based on bias about the target's identity. Because identity-based bullying targets who the student is—a core part of their identity—it can be especially harmful. It impacts not only the individual student but others around them who identify in the same way and who worry that they may be the next target.

Grade Level

Grades 6–12

Learning Objectives

- Students will reflect on their own identities and the identities of others.
- Students will understand the connection between bullying, bias and identity.
- Students will explore examples of identity-based bullying.

Materials Needed

[6 Ways to Be an Ally](#) (English and Spanish)

[Identity-Based Bullying Scenarios](#)

[Identity-Based Bullying Handout](#)

A book about bullying awareness and prevention. (Consider one from a list like Doing Good Together's [Picture Books About Bullies, Bystanders and Being Kind](#)).

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.

Core Activity

Begin by engaging students in a discussion about identity. Ask students: *What does the word “identity” mean?*

- After students have responded, share a definition of identity such as “the qualities and beliefs that make a particular person or group different from others.”

Next, define bullying as: “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.”

- Ask students: *What do you think identity-based bullying means?* Explain that identity-based bullying refers to any form of bullying related to the characteristics considered unique to a person’s identity (or perceived identity), such as their race, religion, sexual orientation or physical appearance.
- Point out to students that they should never blame the target of the bullying; a person is not bullied because they are Jewish or gay or blind. They are bullied because of bias or prejudice.

Think. Pair. Share: Use the Think. Pair. Share protocol to engage students in a discussion about the harm that identity-based bullying causes.

- Ask: *Why is identity-based bullying harmful? Why is it harmful to bullying someone based on their identity?*
- Elicit responses and explain that when someone is targeted because of their identity/group membership, it sends a message to others with that same identity that they could be next.

Finally, provide students the opportunity to reflect on how they can act as allies.

- 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.
- Break students into small groups of approximately 4, and give each group a different scenario from the [Identity-Based Bullying Scenarios](#). Each student should have their own [Identity-Based Bullying Handout](#) as well.
- Explain to students that they are going to take time to reflect on the different ways that they can respond to identity-based bullying using the 6 Ways to Be an Ally. Remind students that they should always consider their safety first. They can always ask a trusted adult for help. They should also keep in mind that not every ally strategy is

Core Activity (Continued)

always the “right fit.” A challenge is always going to be to figure out which ones are the most useful for that particular situation.

- On their handouts, students should create an action plan using the 6 Ways to Be an Ally explaining how they would respond to their scenario.
- After students have created their action plans, allow them to share their responses with the class. (If time allows, have classmates share additional allyship strategies that can be used).

Close by asking students: Why do you think it’s important to call out and stand up against identity-based bullying? What steps can we take to make sure that there is no place for bullying in our school?

Student Leadership Suggestions

How can students take more leadership during this lesson?

- **Identity discussion opener:** Instead of the teacher sharing their own identity example first, invite a few student volunteers to share their identity example out loud before the Think. Pair. Share.
- **Defining identity-based bullying:** Rather than the teacher explaining the concept outright, pose the question (“What do you think identity-based bullying means?”) to a small student panel or have table groups draft their own working definition to share with the class before the official definition is revealed.
- **6 Ways to Be an Ally:** Rather than the teacher reading through the 6 Ways to Be an Ally, have students take the lead by reading through the examples on the handout and engaging their classmates in a discussion about the strategies.

Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further

- Engage a small group of students and staff or the NPFH school committee to work together to create a survey (to be distributed to all students) that seeks information about the extent to which identity-based bullying is an issue at school. The survey should be anonymous and can include questions about bullying/cyberbullying and also ask specific questions about the participants’ membership in certain identity groups and whether they have been targeted based on that identity group. The results can then be compiled and shared with the students and staff with recommendations for addressing identity-based bullying.
- Have students, working alone or in pairs, create picture books for younger students (elementary-age) about identity-based bullying. Students can look over some picture books that already exist (or use Doing Good Together’s Picture Books about Bullies, Bystanders and Being Kind) as inspiration or mentor texts. They should have a younger child (ages 5–10) in mind as they create it. They should keep in mind the following items: include an engaging plot with a story arc, a clear message and theme around identity-based bullying, illustrations

Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further (Continued)

that help to tell the story and characters that are diverse and non-stereotypical. If possible, a group of students can go to a neighboring elementary school or children's library and read their picture books to the students.

- As a class or in small groups, have students create PSAs (public service announcements) about identity-based bullying. The PSAs should have the following components: (1) a clearly stated message, (2) succinct background information, if needed and (3) a concise and inspiring "call to action," which is what you want the viewers to do. The PSAs can be created as a whole class, with small groups taking responsibility for different parts (i.e. script writing, props, set design, acting, etc.) or by having students work in small groups to create the PSAs. These can 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 a person 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 to act as allies for targets of bullying. This will contribute to a classroom and school climate that is more safe, inclusive and respectful.

Identity-Based Bullying SCENARIOS

✂️ 1. During math class, a student jokingly tells a classmate, "You're Jewish, so you must be good with money, right?" A few classmates laugh. The student who made the comment says it was "just a joke" and didn't mean anything by it.

✂️ 2. Yasmin recently moved to the US and speaks slowly and with a strong accent. Every time she speaks, a friend responds by mimicking (copying) her accent and it becomes stronger and stronger every day.

✂️ 3. A student shares a meme that includes a swastika in a group chat. Several classmates react with laughing emojis.

✂️ 4. During gym class, a student tells a Black classmate, "You're good at basketball because you're Black."

✂️ 5. A Muslim student who wears a hijab is asked by classmates, "Do you have to wear that? Doesn't your dad make you?" in a mocking tone during lunch.

✂️ 6. A Jewish student mentions their upcoming trip to synagogue, and a classmate responds, "Wait, you're Jewish? You don't look Jewish," implying Jewish people all look a certain way.

✂️ 7. A boy who enjoys art class and doesn't play sports is repeatedly called "girly" and excluded from certain friend groups because of it.

✂️ 8. When picking groups for a class project, a group of students audibly says, "Let's not pick him, he's gay," loud enough for their classmate to hear.

✂️ 9. A student with a physical disability notices classmates imitating the way they walk when they think no one is looking.

✂️ 10. During a class discussion on WWII, a student argues that "the Holocaust gets talked about too much compared to other historical tragedies," "Jewish people use the Holocaust to get sympathy" and suggests the class "move on to something else already."

Identity-Based Bullying HANDOUT

The 6 Ways to Be an Ally gives you strategies to address incidents of bias when they come up. Some things that you need to remember: always consider your safety first. You can always ask a trusted adult for help. Also keep in mind that: not every ally strategy is always the “right fit.” A challenge is always going to be to figure out which ones are the most useful for that particular situation.

So let's practice!

Scenario goes here.

The 6 Ways to Be an Ally

- Support targets, whether you know them or not
- Don't participate
- Tell aggressors to stop
- Inform a trusted adult
- Get to know people instead of judging them
- Be an ally online

Action Plan:

Use the 6 Ways to Be an Ally to create your action plan to respond to the scenario your group has been given.