

## Article 10:

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### Eliminate Bullying in Your Classroom

¶1 Significant negative effects have been documented on the physical and emotional health of both bullies and their victims (Weinhold, 2000). Bullying has been defined as behavior that is "intentional and causes physical and psychological harm to the recipient" (Smith & Thompson, 1991). Schools can do a great deal to create climates in which bullying is significantly reduced and where students feel safe and supported (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). It is important that as educators we are knowledgeable about interventions that can make a difference for students.

1. Lead a class discussion on bullying. Make certain that students understand what bullying is and why it is harmful. Have them write about their experiences and feelings, and include role-plays to clearly demonstrate what constitutes bullying. You could have older students research the effects on both victims and those who bully so they can understand the extent of the problem.
2. Write a specific no-bullying policy into your classroom rules. Although bullying is a form of aggression that may be covered by other rules, it is important that students see the unique characteristics of bullying so they can help prevent it. Consequences could also be included with the policy if this is a standard procedure with the other class rules.
3. Teach social skills routinely through specific lessons and in conjunction with other activities throughout the day. Many excellent programs, for all age levels, can be obtained through educational publishing companies. Lessons, which can be especially helpful, focus on making friends, being appropriately assertive, and learning to take turns. Although "teachable moments" are certainly important, formal lessons on these topics should also be planned and regularly scheduled into the school day.
4. Teach students how to avoid being a victim and what to do if they are victimized. Specific strategies can be useful if a student finds him- or herself in a possible victim situation. An effective approach can be to use assertive statements such as, "I don't like the way you are talking to me. You sound mean. Stop doing it." Seeking help from nearby friends or adults can also be a good strategic. Some students are able to use humor or "own" the belittling comment ("You're right,

this shirt is pretty ugly. I was too lazy to iron another one this morning") to deescalate a tense situation. Avoiding a bully may be the best choice at times. Finally, using positive self-talk to maintain self-esteem during a bullying incident may be the only appropriate choice (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilli, 1996).

5. Support students who speak out about bullying or who seek extra adult help. All adults in the school should be encouraged to praise students who come to them with bullying concerns. The student should not be made to feel cowardly but rather that this is the duty of a student in this school. Stress that this information could be helpful to prevent other students from being subjected to bullying.
6. Use extra effort to include all students in class activities. If a class project is being planned, give everyone a role. Be on the lookout for students who are getting left out of situations or groups, and try to bring them in with specific assignments or jobs.
7. Reinforce responsible, positive behaviors whenever possible. Public praise is always a powerful tool. In addition, choose a student each week who was "caught caring" and reward him or her with age-appropriate privileges or reinforcers (Garrity et al., 1996). Make it clear that this is how to achieve status in your class, and convey this message in as many ways as possible.
8. Use a confidential "message box" for student suggestions or comments on classroom concerns. Some students may be hesitant about bringing up subtle forms of bullying in person, but a written, confidential communication method may make this easier for them. Also, make yourself available so students can talk with you privately about their concerns.
9. Always model respectful behavior toward students. Never use intimidation or sarcasm. Your behavior as an educator is extremely important and conveys a powerful message to students. Even when students are disrespectful or rude, it is imperative that your demeanor be calm and in control. As you set limits in this manner, students observe an assertive way to behave that does not imitate the person attempting to bully.
10. Make sure that situations that have the potential of becoming aggressive are closely supervised. For example, outdoor recess periods or before and after lunch free time can be opportunities for bullying students to find victims. It may be best to schedule similar age groups for free time together to avoid having older students mixed with much younger students. It also may be advisable to plan some structured activities during these nonacademic times. Make sure all areas are well patrolled so there are no isolated spots for bullying to occur (Stephenson & Smith, 1997).
11. Intervene immediately with an approach that matches the incident if bullying occurs. If the bullying involves degrading language or slurs, the adult may only need to use a firm, low-key intervention such as saying, "Those words offend me."



We don't talk like that here." This may be enough to break a pattern of escalation. If a more physically aggressive incident is observed or reported, a multifaceted approach to intervening may be required. Involve student, school, and family in this case, and use appropriate consequences as well as preventive measures for the future (Wessler, 2001).

12. Insist that the bully make amends if the incident involves a specific targeted victim. Exactly how this is accomplished will depend on the situation. The victim should agree to this action, and the apology should be supervised to make certain that it is carried out in the right manner. Some ways that a bully might make amends could be a public apology, a private face-to-face apology, an apology in writing, or performance of a special favor for the victim (Pearce, 1997).
13. Arrange your class schedule to minimize chaos. A clearly organized schedule and activity stations that are separated and thoughtfully arranged make student interactions more positive. Also, make certain that there are adequate materials for all students in order to minimize potential conflicts (Stephenson & Smith, 1997).
14. Provide many ways to gain recognition in your classroom. Nonacademic as well as academic achievements should be praised. Effort should especially be rewarded. Students should get the message that there are many ways to succeed and that it is possible for them to attain recognition for their particular strengths.
15. Have a clear process to report bullying. These procedures should be discussed with the class and be publicly displayed. It should be understood that reporting is the expectation and to not do so would be breaking a rule. Be alert to students placing a stigma on reporters, and address this immediately.
16. Enlist students in no-bullying activities. Making posters for display around the school or making presentations at assemblies or PTA meetings could be projects for the whole class. Emphasizing the role of bystanders could be a theme for these public information activities because many students may think they have no part in these projects if they are not bullies or have not been victimized personally.
17. Encourage administrators and faculty members to write a no-bullying policy into the school handbook. This will make the school's attitude toward bullying official and be an important first step in establishing an environment that does not condone intimidation at any level (Froschl & Gropper, 1999).
18. Plan an in-service meeting for all staff members to address bullying. All school personnel need to know what bullying really means and how the misuse of power can affect the atmosphere of an entire school. Include bus drivers, cafeteria staff, and assistants because they may often witness bullying but not know the most effective response.
19. Involve parents in your no-bullying efforts. As a classroom teacher, include your no-bullying policy procedures with the information you send home at the

beginning of the year addressing general rules and homework. Include information in your parent-teacher conferences, and encourage parents to talk with their children about this issue. Respond quickly and positively to any parent concerns about individual incidents.

20. Use the PTA to publicize the school's no-bullying policy. If parents become part of the team trying to prevent bullying, your efforts will be far more successful (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). Inviting mental health professionals to speak with the PTA about the importance of this issue may make it more relevant. Also, having speakers address how to get students to talk about being intimidated may open up important channels of communication between parents and children.

Persons interested in submitting material for 20 Ways To... should contact Robin H. Lock, College of Education, Box 41071, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 76409-1701.

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[In the United Kingdom, they are wearing blue wristbands to "beat bullying."]  
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