

# Exploring the Nature and Prevention of Bullying

## Action Steps for Teachers

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Because they are typically surrounded by groups of young people, classroom teachers very likely represent the adult who is present for the greatest number of social interactions among students. They are also specifically responsible for educating youth and preparing them for the world at large. If peer relations are problematic, this will interfere with time on task and academic development among students. The topic of interpersonal relations further represents a vital subject to be addressed in the classroom if students are to be adequately prepared to thrive both within and beyond school walls. The following are some specific steps that teachers can take to initiate and maintain bullying prevention activities at school:

- Provide students with opportunities to talk about bullying and enlist their support in defining bullying as unacceptable behavior.
- Involve students in establishing classroom rules against bullying. Such rules may include a commitment from the teacher to not "look the other way" when incidents involving bullying occur.
- Provide classroom activities and discussions related to bullying and violence, including the harm that they cause and strategies to reduce them. Depending on the age of the students, this could involve opportunities to role-play and/or process specific ways bullying can be addressed in their school.
- Develop a classroom action plan to ensure that students know what to do when they observe a bully/victim confrontation. It is particularly important to emphasize to students the difference between tattling and telling on someone, and encourage them to report to adults any situation in which a peer is being bullied or abused.
- Teach cooperation by assigning projects that require collaboration. Such cooperation teaches students how to compromise and how to assert without demanding. Take care to vary grouping of participants and to monitor the treatment of participants in each group.
- Take immediate action when bullying is observed. All teachers and school staff must let children know that they care and will not allow anyone to be mistreated. By taking immediate action and dealing directly with the bully, adults support both the victim and the witnesses.
- Confront bullies in private. Challenging a bully in front of his/her peers may actually enhance his/her status and lead to further aggression.
- Notify the parents of both victims and bullies when a confrontation occurs, and seek to resolve the problem expeditiously at school.
- Refer both victims and aggressors to counseling whenever appropriate.
- Provide protection for bullying victims, whenever necessary. Such protection may include creating a buddy system whereby students have a particular friend or older buddy on whom they can depend and with whom they share class schedule information and plans for the school day.
- Listen receptively to parents who report bullying and investigate reported circumstances so that immediate and appropriate school action may be taken.
- Avoid attempts to mediate a bullying situation. The difference in power between victims and bullies may cause victims to feel further victimized by the process or believe that they are somehow at fault.