

Talk to your class about bullying early to prevent incidents throughout the year.

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## WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is repeated, unwanted aggressive behaviour that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance. It can result in serious physical, social, psychological or educational harm and distress for those who are bullied (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

- Bullying is deliberate and purposeful. The goal is to cause distress to another person or gain a social or material reward.
- Bullying is a relationship problem. Over time, the person who is bullying feels more powerful and the person who is being bullied feels more helpless, shamed, and trapped.
- Bullying can be physical (e.g., pushing), verbal (e.g., name calling) or social (e.g., excluding).
- Cyberbullying is targeting, embarrassing, harassing or threatening another person on purpose using online communication technology.
- Bullying is often directed at students who are perceived as different, such as based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression, appearance, body type, ability, popularity, and so forth.
- Bullying requires solutions that create safety and positive social and emotional growth for those who bully, who are bullied and who witness bullying.

## WHY IS BULLYING A CONCERN FOR EDUCATORS?

- Bullying prevalence is associated with decreased student well-being, academic achievement, and school engagement.
- Bullying teaches students that aggression can be used to control and cause distress to others. This can carry into adulthood unless students learn constructive ways to interact with others.
- Being bullied increases risk for serious current and life-long physical, social and mental health problems.

## WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH BULLYING?

- Tell students they don't have to be friends with everyone, but they need to respect everyone's rights to be safe and treated with dignity.
- Be a role model. Demonstrate positive social behaviours and attitudes: respect, caring, inclusiveness, and valuing others' differences. Stand up for anyone who is bullied.
- Recognize and reward your students' positive social behaviours and attitudes.
- Do not tolerate oppressive slang, including racial slurs or insults based on sexuality or gender.
- Be proactive. Discuss positive relationships with your students and use opportunities like Bullying Awareness Week to support these discussions.
- Assign students to partners/groups/teams to promote positive interactions and decrease stress for all students.
- Remind students that seeking help from an adult is different from tattling. Listen with concern and empathy when students seek your help. Recognize the courage it takes to report bullying.
- Work with your school team to implement evidence-informed bullying prevention policies and procedures in your school.