



Creating a **Safe and Respectful Environment** in Our Nation's Classrooms  
**Creating a Supportive Classroom Climate**

MODULE

**2**

**Workshop Agenda**

Handout

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**Objectives**

Participants in the workshop will:

- Consider what a supportive classroom climate looks like and how it can prevent bullying.
- Examine the role of teacher-to-student and student-to-student relationships in building a supportive classroom climate.
- Explore strategies for preventing bullying in the classroom, including establishing a culture of respect for differences among students.
- Consider how building a web of positive support among students and other adults across the school community can help prevent bullying.
- Identify and commit to use one new strategy for preventing bullying in their daily work with students.

**Agenda**

- Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)
- What Is Bullying? (10 minutes)
- Elements of a Positive Classroom Climate (20 minutes)
- The Power of Teacher-to-Student Relationships (15 minutes)
- Encouraging Positive Student-to-Student Relationships in the Classroom (20 minutes)
- Strategies for Building a Supportive Classroom Climate (45 minutes)
- Building a Web of Support (10 minutes)
- Affirming What We Already Do...Planning to Do Something New (10 minutes)
- Review and Evaluation (10 minutes)
- Adjourn



## Creating a **Safe and Respectful Environment** in Our Nation's Classrooms

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## Facts About Bullying Behavior

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both children who are bullied and children who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

Bullying is a form of youth violence that includes:

- *Unwanted, aggressive behavior*
- *A real or perceived imbalance of power between the student(s) doing the bullying and the student(s) being bullied*
- *Behavior that is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time*

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

## Types of Bullying

There are four types of bullying:

1. **Verbal bullying** involves saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:
  - Teasing
  - Name calling
  - Inappropriate sexual comments
  - Taunting
  - Threatening to cause harm
2. **Social bullying**, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
  - Leaving someone out on purpose
  - Telling other children not to be friends with someone
  - Spreading rumors about someone
  - Embarrassing someone in public
3. **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:
  - Hitting, kicking, or pinching
  - Spitting
  - Tripping or pushing
  - Taking or breaking someone's things
  - Making mean or rude hand gestures

4. **Cyberbullying** involves the use of e-mail, social network sites, cell phones, webcams, text messages, Internet sites, etc., to send mean messages, spread rumors, and post embarrassing pictures or videos and fake websites or profiles. Cyberbullying messages can:
- Happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
  - Be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a wide audience
  - Be extremely difficult to delete

## Where and When Bullying Happens

Bullying can occur during or after school hours. Although most reported bullying happens in the school building, a significant percentage also happens in places like on the playground or the school bus. It can also happen travelling to or from school, in the youth's neighborhood, or on the Internet.

## Frequency of Bullying

There are two sources of federally collected data on youth bullying:

- The 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) indicates that, nationwide, 20 percent of students in Grades 9–12 experienced bullying.
- The 2008–2009 School Crime Supplement (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics) indicates that, nationwide, 28 percent of students in Grades 6–12 experienced bullying.

Learn more about the material used in this handout at [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov).



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## Elements of Supportive Classroom Climate

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### Engagement

Engagement is characterized by the (1) quality of relationships—including respect for diversity—between students and their peers, staff and their peers, students and staff, and staff and families; (2) the level of participation and involvement by families, staff, and students in school activities, and (3) efforts by schools to connect with the larger community. Engagement involves:

- **Quality relationships** between students, staff (including staff-administrator), and staff-family relationships, as well as the connection to the community at large
- **Respect for diversity** through the acceptance or intolerance displayed toward various subgroups in the school and the community at large
- **School participation** as demonstrated through the connection between staff, students, and families and the school setting demonstrated by participation and involvement in school activities and governance, as well as the inclusion of the community at large into school activities

### Safety

Safety is the physical and emotional security of the school setting and school-related activities as perceived, experienced, and created by students, staff, families, and the community. Safety involves:

- **Emotional safety** of the school community influenced by the positive (prosocial) and negative (harassment) behaviors of students and staff
- **Physical safety** of the school community influenced by the behaviors of students and staff
- **Addressing substance use** or the presence of substance use and trade in the school setting and during school-related activities

## Environment

Environment is (1) the physical and mental health supports offered to students, (2) the physical plant, (3) the academic environment, and (4) the fairness and adequacy of disciplinary procedures. Environment involves:

- **Physical environment**, or the facility's upkeep, ambient noise, lighting, indoor air quality, and/or thermal comfort
- **Academic environment**, or the instructional, behavioral, and personal aspects of classroom management
- **Wellness**, or the availability of school-based physical and mental health supports for students
- **Disciplinary environment**, or the communication of policies regarding discipline and behavior to the school community and the adequacy and fairness of policy enforcement

Learn more about the material used in this handout at the Safe and Supportive Schools Technical Assistance Center website at <http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=23>.



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## Inclusion, Respect, and Communication: Creating a Bully-Free Classroom

Research confirms that it is important to make all students feel like they belong. This means not only dealing with issues related to bullying in the classroom but also generally promoting an atmosphere of respect and inclusion.

### Inclusion

Along with teaching students how to talk about differences in a respectful and informative way that does not single out individual students, educators can design and implement classroom routines that engage student learning in a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment (6).

*Note: Numbers within parentheses refer to the source of the information presented in the handout. See the citation list at the end of the Trainer's Outline for this module.*

Key strategies include:

*Establishing a culture of inclusion and respect* that welcomes all students by developing a clear set of classroom norms and rules regarding how students are to treat one another. These norms are most effective when they are (6, 8, 13):

- Developed with student input
- Simple and understandable
- Posted in the classroom
- Fairly enforced with positive and negative consequences

*Expanding students' knowledge of diversity* by exposing them to role models through literature, lessons, and classroom guests. Make sure students have the opportunity to choose books that portray diverse families as well as men and women outside of gender stereotypes. Integrate examples of people from various backgrounds into classroom discussions and stories. Seek out diverse speakers, mentors, and role models for classroom participation (6).

*Using inclusive language* when referring to students, families, or others outside of the classroom. Doing so role models for students more respectful and inclusive vocabularies (6).

## Respect

Just like forming friendships, we cannot make students respect one another, but teachers can model behavior and attitudes that demonstrate to students how they should interact with each other. Teachers can create a social environment in which students are encouraged to get to know and learn how to respect one another.

Key strategies include (1, 6, 8, 13):

- Setting a tone of respect in the classroom, which includes managing student behavior so everyone feels safe. Well-managed classrooms are the least likely to have bullying.
- Exposing students to accurate information and positive representations of those who they perceive as different from them.
- Providing time for students to learn and practice a range of positive, respectful behaviors in their interactions and relationships. Connect their own experiences with learning, but avoid singling out individual students.
- Talking about differences in a respectful way including examples of people with varied backgrounds and orientations.
- Teaching about the differences between respectful debate and intolerant dialogue and name calling. This means providing a safe atmosphere in which to discuss these issues.

## Communication

Communication can take many forms in the classroom, ranging from anti-bullying norms posted in the classroom, to class lessons, to a conversation with an individual student. When having lessons or class discussions, it is important to never put individual students on the spot to talk about their heritage, religion, sexual orientation, family backgrounds, etc., unless they want to share information with the class.

One very important and useful strategy for promoting respect, inclusion, and a general positive environment is the classroom discussion or whole-class meeting. Teachers can raise awareness about bullying and many other issues through whole-class discussions. These forums can also be used for teaching and practicing behaviors while providing students with a safe place to ask questions or express concerns. Classroom discussions and meetings can also help teachers stay informed about what is going on with students.

These tips for classroom meetings come from [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) (13):

- **Meetings work best in classrooms where a culture of respect is already established.** Classroom meetings are typically short and held on a regular schedule. They can be held in a student's main classroom, homeroom, or advisory period.
- **Establish ground rules.** Students should feel free to discuss issues without fear. Classroom meetings are not a time to discuss individual conflicts or gossip about others. Reinforce existing classroom rules.
- **Start the conversation.** Focus on specific topics, such as bullying or respectful behaviors. Meetings can identify and address problems affecting the group as a whole. Stories should be broad and lead to solutions that build trust and respect between students. Use open-ended questions or prompts such as:
  - Share an example of a student who helped someone at school this week.

- Without names, share an example of someone who made another student feel bad.
- What did students nearby do? What did you do? Did you want to do something different—why or why not?
- If you could describe the perfect response to the situation, what would it be? How hard or easy would it be to do? Why?
- How can adults help?
- **End the meeting with a reminder that it is everyone’s job to make school a positive place to learn.** Encourage students to talk to teachers or other trusted adults if they see bullying or are worried about how someone is being treated.
- **Follow up when necessary.** Monitor student body language and reactions. If a topic seems to be affecting a student, follow up with him or her. Know what resources are available to support students affected by bullying.

Learn more about the materials used in this handout at:

- *Ready, Set, Respect! GLSEN’s Elementary School Toolkit* (GLSEN, 2012)
- *Welcoming Schools: A Project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation* ([www.welcomingschools.org](http://www.welcomingschools.org))
- [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)
- *The Right to Be Safe: Putting an End to Bullying Behavior* (Meehan, 2011)
- “Ten Things Students Wish Teachers Knew About Name-Calling & Bullying” (Anti-Defamation League, 2005)



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## Moving From Standing By to Stepping Up

Young people can be affected when they witness bullying behaviors. They may not know what to do to stop it, or they may not feel safe speaking up. Students may worry that if they say something, they are “tattling.”

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In a 2004 study, researchers found that a focus on engaging bystanders in nine schools resulted in less violence than when schools focused on punishing students who bullied and counseling students who were bullied (4). Since many students say they witness many bullying incidents that adults do not see, empowering children and youth to speak up becomes an important strategy in creating a supportive school climate.

*Note: Numbers within parentheses refer to the source of the information presented in the handout. See the citation list at the end of the Trainer's Outline for this module.*

Try using the following strategies to help all students feel comfortable stepping up instead of standing by.

### Building Positive School Climate

- Make sure younger children, in particular, understand the difference between tattling (trying to get someone in trouble) and reporting (trying to get someone out of trouble) (11).
- Be a positive adult role model in young people's lives. The more positive adult relationships youth have, the better they do in school, and the less violence they engage in (2).
- Work on strong, positive relationships with students. Connect with them, and provide them with emotional support. Recognize their achievements and accomplishments (8).
- Acknowledge that bullying does occur and that being bullied can be painful. Do not downplay what students tell you about how they are feeling or what they are experiencing (1).

### Intervene and Model Positive Behavior When You See Bullying

- Stay calm.
- Do not make assumptions about what you think is happening.
- Do not belittle, embarrass, or label any students.
- Speak up, be assertive (not aggressive), and clearly state school rules if necessary.
- Take time to listen. Do not try to fix a situation before you listen carefully.

## Help Students Learn How to Become Effective Allies

- Provide time for them to learn and practice positive strategies practiced by good allies.
- Discuss safety concerns and brainstorm alternative strategies.
- Depending on the situation and comfort level of youth involved, help them learn when it is appropriate to (11):
  1. Walk away.
  2. Support.
  3. Report.
  4. Assertively tell.
- Do not communicate an expectation that students should always directly intervene when bullying occurs.

Students can (8):

- Refuse to participate in the bullying behaviors.
- Tell the person to stop bullying.
- Tell a trusted adult what is happening.
- Be a supportive friend or ally to the student who is being bullied.

For a more comprehensive list of strategies youth can use, visit <http://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/be-more-than-a-bystander/index.html>

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## Strategies for Creating a Supportive Classroom Climate\*

**Engagement:** A process of events and opportunities that leads to students gaining the skills and confidence to cope and feel safe in school.

- *Be a role model*—Treat all students and colleagues respectfully.
- *Be proactive*—Teach the difference between respectful debate and intolerant dialogue and name calling.
- *Be available*—Check in with students regularly to see how they are doing. Let them know you are available to talk.
- *Listen*—Engage students in conversation about what is happening in their lives and actively listen.
- *Be positive*—Encourage and model positive thinking while also providing positive strategies for dealing with adversity.
- *Have fun*—Humor and having fun are great ways to have personal connections and help students feel like they are part of a positive climate and culture.
- *Teach more inclusively*—Integrate examples of people from different backgrounds into lessons, stories, and discussions. Use inclusive language, and avoid organizing in the classroom by gender or stereotypes.

**Remember:** Be discreet and maintain confidentiality. Never put individual students on the spot by asking them to talk about their heritage, religion, sexual orientation, etc., unless they want to share with the class. Do not announce when a student is having problems, but, rather, help each student privately whenever possible.

**Environment:** All aspects of a school that promote student safety and student health.

- *Walk your talk*—Weave positive behaviors into daily interactions with students and colleagues. Follow the rules yourself. Show students respect.
- *Set a positive tone in your classroom*—Manage student behavior well, demonstrating appropriate boundaries and expectations for positive relationships.
- *Examine your own beliefs*—Become more aware of your own assumptions, biases, or stereotypes. Do you expect boys to act one way and girls another? Challenge these assumptions, and intervene when you hear others doing the same.
- *Treat students fairly*—Work directly with both students who are being bullied and students who are bullying others.
- *Establish a culture of respect for differences*—Make everyone feel they belong, and talk about differences in respectful and informative ways.
- *Engage parents and youth*—Work together to send a unified message against bullying.
- *Create a safe environment*—Have classroom meetings. Work with students to create and launch an awareness campaign in their classroom and school.

**Safety:** The security of the school setting and school-related activities that encompasses emotional and physical safety.

- *Intervene*—Step in to help during problematic situations. Students prefer that teachers actively use their power as adults and professionals to identify concerns and offer solutions.
- *Make a safe, bully-free culture the “norm”*—Talk about bullying on a regular basis.
- *Encourage students to do what they love*—Special activities, interests, and hobbies can boost confidence, help young people make friends, and protect them from bullying behavior.
- *Keep communication open*—Make time for daily conversations about students’ lives and feelings, and ask a variety of questions. Talk about bullying with them. If concerns come up, be sure to respond.
- *Stay on top of things*—Read and learn about bullying. Create supportive ground rules for your classroom.
- *Use positive terms*—Tell students what to do, not just what not to do.
- *Teach positive relationship skills*—Encourage them to be successful!

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- [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)
- *The Right to Be Safe: Putting an End to Bullying Behavior* (Meehan, 2011)
- “Ten Things Students Wish Teachers Knew About Name-Calling & Bullying” (Anti-Defamation League, 2005)
- “Walking the Talk” Makes a Difference in Bullying Prevention (Hirschstein, et al., 2007)



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## Reflection Sheet

Identify up to three things you already do that help build a caring and supportive climate in your classroom:

1.

2.

3.

Identify three promising strategies you could try to help prevent bullying behavior in your classroom:

1.

2.

3.

Identify one strategy that you will commit to using with students in your classroom during the next week or the first week of the new school year:

1.



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## Evaluation Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating in the workshop. Your answers to the questions on this brief form will help us improve the workshop for others.

**Choose only *one* answer for each question.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>This workshop effectively...</b>					
1. Provided a clear definition of positive classroom climate, what it looks like, and how it prevents bullying.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Explored strategies for preventing bullying in the classroom focused on the power of positive teacher-to-student and student-to-student relationships in shaping a supportive classroom climate.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Introduced elements of a supportive classroom setting and strategies for building a supportive classroom as a way to prevent or reduce bullying behavior.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Provided an opportunity to identify and commit to one strategy for preventing bullying behavior in my daily work with students.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>The presenter...</b>					
5. Possessed a solid knowledge of the subject matter.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Helped me understand the importance of my role in addressing bullying behavior.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Encouraged me try something new in dealing with or preventing bullying behavior.	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Overall...</b>					
8. The quality of this presentation was excellent.	5	4	3	2	1
9. After attending this workshop, I feel better prepared to deal with bullying behavior.	5	4	3	2	1

**Additional comments:**

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**I have worked in schools for:**

- 0–5 years       6–10 years       11–20 years       More than 20 years

**Thank you! Please return your completed form to the trainer.**

