

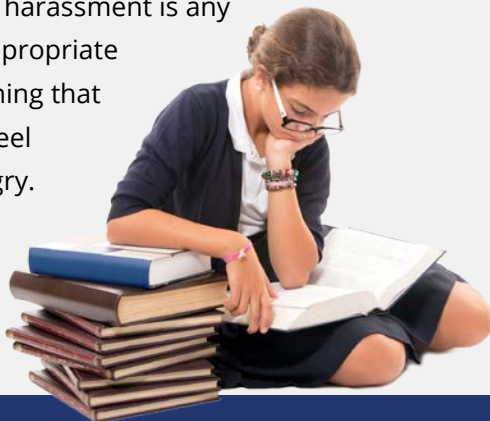


# Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

## Bullying, Exclusion and Harassment

Bullying is when a person tries to hurt another person, and does it more than once. It can be physical, verbal, or social, and can also take place over the internet with emails or text messages. The bully is usually in a position of real or perceived power over the person being bullied. Power imbalance is viewed as a characteristic that distinguishes bullying from other similar forms of conflict (Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

Exclusion and sexual harassment can both be considered forms of bullying. Exclusion is when students feel excluded or treated unfairly at school because of their ethnic or cultural background, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or another perceived categorical boundary. Sexual harassment is any unwanted or inappropriate language or touching that makes a person feel upset, hurt or angry.



### Why is it important?

- Students who feel they are being supported report higher levels of engagement (Green et al., 2008).
- Bullying negatively impacts the physical, mental, and educational well-being of students with potentially long-term effects (Nansel et al., 2001).
- Many teachers do not feel equipped to handle bullying incidents, despite existing training efforts that may be provided (Bradshaw et al., 2011).

## In Practice

School leaders can address bullying concerns by developing effective policies and procedures to actively address and prevent bullying incidents.



### What can schools do?

Schools should adopt a formal structure to address bullying by:

- Establishing clearly defined procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing incidents of bullying, harassment, and violence at school.
- Encouraging students to report incidents and provide appropriate support for those who have been victims of bullying, harassment, and violence.
- Offering training programs that teach school personnel to understand, identify and intervene appropriately when bullying occurs.
- Establishing a formal tiered system for identifying and tracking misbehaviours and making sure that there are clear consequences for bullying which are consistently enforced.



### In the Classroom

The following actions can be used to counter the threat of bullying and violence in the classroom:

- Demonstrate authority and efficacy by reinforcing school bullying policies and procedures, when bullying incidents occur..
- Focus on preventative measures and teachable moments rather than punitive consequences.
- Facilitate an inclusive culture where individual differences are accepted and all students feel equally understood and supported.
- Regularly check-in with vulnerable or alienated students and, where concerns exist, work towards mutually agreeable solutions.

## References

- Batsche, G. M., & Knoff, H. M. (1994). Bullies and their victims: Understanding a pervasive problem in the schools. *School Psychology Review, 23*, 165-175.
- Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., O'Brennan, L. M., & Gulemetova, M. (2011). *Findings from the National Education Association's nationwide study of bullying: Teachers' and support professionals' perspectives*. National Education Association. education
- Juvonen, J., & Graham, S. (2014). Bullying in schools: The power of bullies and the plight of victims. *Annual review of psychology, 65*, 159-185.
- Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among US youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *JAMA, 285*(16), 2094-2100.