Bullying Prevention:
A Guide for Educators
Project Prevent and Address Bullying (PPAB)
for students with disabilities

IDEAs that Work
Office of Special
Education Programs

Northern Illinois University | School Psychology Program

Teachers have unique opportunities to reduce rates of bullying, prevent future bullying from occurring, and establish a positive school climate. When students perceive that their teachers believe that bullying is unacceptable, bullying behaviors reduce over time. **Do not wait until you notice bullying happening to start taking action.** Be proactive and address bullying before it becomes a problem.

General strategies to create a safe and supportive environment:

• Establish a culture of inclusion and respect that welcomes all students.
• Make sure students are interacting safely.
• Monitor bullying "hot spots" (e.g. playgrounds, hallways).
• Set a tone of respect in your classroom.
• Do not allow harmful language use and name-calling in the classroom.
• Be consistent; address harmful behaviors or language use every time it occurs.

Bully prevention starts with supportive, well-functioning school and classroom environments. Many schools use positive behavior support (PBS) and social emotional learning (SEL) to set the stage for a positive school climate. PBS emphasizes teacher communication of appropriate behaviors to students. SEL emphasizes student understanding of and engagement in emotion management, empathy, positive relationships, and responsible decision making.

PBS strategies to use in your classroom:

• Develop a few clear, concise rules collaboratively with your students.
• Tell students what they should do, not what they shouldn't do.
• Post classroom rules so that they are visible to all students.
• Use role-playing and modeling to teach expectations.
• Circulate unpredictably throughout the room during unstructured times, making sure you are visible to your children and that they are visible to you.
• Strive to give students more positive feedback than corrective; aim for a ratio of 3 positive statements to every 1 corrective statement.
• When correcting students, be brief, specific, consistent, calm and respectful.
• Help students understand rule violations and their consequences.
• Reward positive student behaviors to encourage recurrence of them.
• Encourage students to "tell on" each other for doing something nice and appropriate, rewarding students with positive attention from both their peers and their teacher for positive behavior.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of PBS strategies to use in your classroom. One example of a published PBS program is the Safe & Civil Schools' model, a professional development tool that utilizes the acronym STOIC: Structure for Success; Teach Expectations; Observe and Monitor; Interact Positively; and Correct Fluently (Sprick, Isaacs, Booher, Sprick, & Rich, 2014). This is one example of a strong program designed to increase staff's ability to manage challenging behavior in a positive way.

Using SEL to prevent bullying

SEL involves teaching students to understand and manage emotions; set and achieve positive goals; feel and show empathy for others; establish and maintain positive relationships; and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2018). SEL fosters a safe and caring learning environment which reduces incidents of bullying (Espelage et al., 2011) SEL can be implemented in many different ways, including:

• Teaching prepared curricula (such as Second Step or PATHS).
• Using common positive language throughout the day.
• Modeling expected behaviors for your students at all times.

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