



KA2 - Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices

Strategic Partnerships for Schools only

10 steps to building a bully-free school

When schools create a culture where everyone belongs, bullying is less of a problem.

1. Establish clearly defined schoolwide behavior expectations rather than rules that describe only general principles.

Here is an example of a clearly defined rule: “No teasing. Teasing is name-calling, starting rumors, gestures, or other actions that are likely to make students feel bad about themselves.”

2. Use predictable and escalating consequences for aggression rather than creating a unique consequence for each student and each situation.

When there are inconsistent consequences for bullying, young people are likely to continue.

3. Maintain a positive emotional tone between adults and youth rather than treating students with anger and frustration.

When consequences come from a rubric, when they are earned rather than given, and when there are planned next steps if the student continues to choose aggression, there is no need for adults to use anger as a behavior management tool.

4. Acknowledge positive actions rather than ignoring positive behavior or using person-based praise.

When staff point out students’ positive behavior using descriptive language, students are more likely to repeat this behavior.

5. Provide structured opportunities for aggressive youth to think about their actions instead of using threats, lectures or anger.

When young people take responsibility for their actions and for hurting others, they strengthen conscience.

6. Work to develop a peer climate in which bystanders discourage bullying and in which peers befriend targets.

When 85 percent of the school population — the bystanders — stop watching silently and start telling bullies to stop, telling adults, and reaching out in friendship, bullying behavior becomes less damaging and less frequent.

7. Protect targets and bystanders from repeated or retaliatory harassment.

Reducing the rate of bullying is the best support we can give targets.

8. Help targets to reverse feelings of self-blame and to feel powerful.

Targets often begin to believe what the bullies say about them: that they are stupid, ugly, or fat. Helping targets to see themselves more positively often takes time.

9. Help targets build friendships.

Social isolation is the most painful part of being bullied. We can encourage peers to reach out in friendship and help targets participate in that friendship.

10. Recognize and build on the strengths and accomplishments of your school community. When we recognize the positive programs and practices that stop bullying in a school, staff and students are more likely to continue them.

**This article is adapted from the book, Schools Where Everyone Belongs, by Stan Davis.*