Empowering Student Voice

Information for teachers

Rationale

Bullying is a complex, multifaceted issue, different in each school and year level. The appropriate way to respond will be different for each situation and every student. The *Empowering student voice* engagement activity provides an opportunity for Australian students to participate in open classroom discussions about bullying, relevant to their settings. It will allow students to consider, discuss, and contribute to the creation of appropriate and relevant strategies to respond to bullying in their context.

Implementation

Select from four Digital lesson plans appropriate for your teaching context; Years 3-4, 5-6, 7-9, and 10-12. Each presentation is specially designed for ease of implementation. Minimal teacher preparation is required. The presentation is editable so that you may make any necessary changes to suit your context. Printable teacher Lesson plans are also available for facilitation of activities depending on your preference and available resources.

The student engagement activity unpacks the definition of bullying and uses examples from the Student voices poster series to prompt authentic classroom discussions about what to say and do in response to bullying. Students create class tips using the Bullying. No Way! tips template to Take Action Together in response to bullying.

In addition, there are two optional activities to choose from

1. Students can create a Bullying. No Way! chatterbox based on appropriate strategies that they might say and do in response to bullying.

2. Using the Make your own student voice poster, students can create their own version of the *Student voices poster series* based on appropriate strategies that they may say and do in response to bullying.

Important to note

Discussion guidelines

A safe environment must be created and maintained to encourage students to speak freely, feel supported and avoid discussions that may cause distress.

You may need to adjust the guidance you provide to students depending on your knowledge of your students' histories and experiences with bullying.

When discussing bullying in the classroom, encourage students to **talk in general terms** and about the whole school, using sentences such as:

- "Some people might … and this could cause a person to feel …"

- "At some schools …"

- "There have been times when …"

- Encourage students to justify their comments and responses, for example, "I think this because…"

Justifying and explaining points of view will enable all members of the group to gain a deeper understanding of the thinking and reasoning processes that are taking place.

Protective interrupting

Take Action Together

www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

Protective interrupting is a useful tool for teachers when engaging in classroom discussions about bullying. It is possible a student will begin to disclose personal information, or a teacher might sense that a student is about to make such a disclosure. Protective interrupting aims to protect students from the consequences of revealing inappropriate personal information in front of other students. In such a situation, the teacher should acknowledge they have heard the student by using words like 'That sounds important', but stop them divulging any further details. The teacher should suggest the student talks privately with them after the formal discussion or, if possible, ask the student if they would like to leave the classroom then to continue the conversation. If a student should make a disclosure of bullying currently occurring, your role is to listen calmly, show support for the student, acknowledge what they have told you and, once the student has finished, discuss with them what you could both do next. Ensure you are aware of your school's policy and or procedure for dealing with bullying.

Appropriate responses

This student engagement activity provides an opportunity to empower student voice. However, at times it may be necessary to ensure that student responses on what to say and do in response to bullying are appropriate.

Safe online behaviour discussions

It is acknowledged that most social media platforms and apps set a minimum age of 12 or 13 years and above, indicating that students in Years 3 to 6 should not typically be engaged with the majority of these online services.

Texting, however, is not age restricted and is a common site for problem interactions to occur between peers. The purpose of raising the conversation of safe online behaviour with this age group is to serve as a preventative intervention that provides younger students with the knowledge and skills, including language, to understand the risks and seek assistance when required.

Australian Curriculum

Learning areas

Humanities and Social Sciences

Health and Physical Education

Technologies

General capabilities

Personal and Social Capability

Ethical Understandings

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

Student voice principle

Students are active participants in their own learning and wellbeing, feel connected and use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe.

Student voice effective practices:

- Provide opportunities for authentic student decision-making over matters that affect them

- Create and maintain inclusive and interactive learning environments to encourage active student participation to foster a sense of connectedness

- Actively engage students through the use of evidence-informed, strengths-based approaches to enhance their own learning and wellbeing

- Explicitly teach social and emotional skills using evidence-informed practices related to personal safety, resilience, help-seeking and protective behaviours across the curriculum

- Collaborate with students to develop strategies to enhance wellbeing, promote safety and counter violence, bullying and abuse in all online and physical spaces.

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