

# Empower Educators

Resources & strategies for educators who have students who are the target of bullying, who want to help a friend who has been bullied, or who have engaged in bullying behavior.



## How to respond when *your student* has been the target of bullying.

**If you found out your student was the target of online bullying behaviors OR if your student reaches out to you and asks for help about an online bullying situation, what would you say or do?**

**Safety first!** Make sure the target, the perpetrators, and bystanders are safe. Once safety has been established separate conversations with all parties can begin. Always consult and follow your school's policy. You can also refer to the Facebook Parent & Teen resources for more information.

Ideally, your school has adopted an evidence-based approach to social and emotional learning (SEL) so that students are developing the necessary life skills of self-awareness, self-regulation, responsible decision making, empathy, and conflict resolution. If not, addressing a bullying incident is a good time to explore bringing a social and emotional learning program to your school. In 2015 for instance Facebook and Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence launched InspirEd in the U.S.

**Prevention Policy:** The emotional climate of a school and its classrooms influence the community's well-being and students' ability to learn. By building a school wide bullying prevention policy and teaching emotional intelligence skills to your students, you can help to prevent mean and cruel behavior in the first place. One social and emotional learning program, **RULER**, has students and their teachers create an Emotional Intelligence Charter - a collaborative document that helps to establish a supportive and productive learning

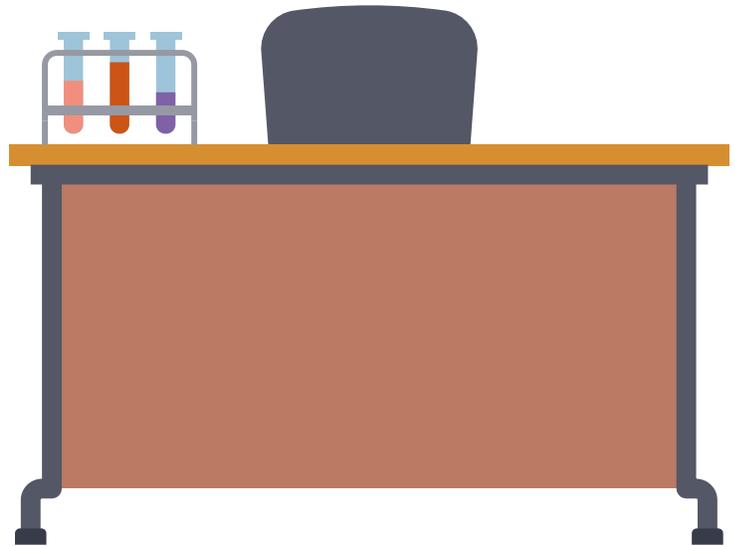
environment. It is created by members of the community, outlining how they aspire to treat each other. Together, the community describes how they want to feel at school, the behaviors that foster those feelings, and guidelines for preventing and managing unwanted feelings and conflict. By working together to build the Charter, everyone establishes common goals and holds each other accountable for creating the positive climate they envision. ▶

**Reporting:** It's also important to set up a clear system for reporting. Do you have an anonymous reporting box? Let students know when and how to report issues of bullying. Bullying, or mean behavior, comes in many forms including someone saying mean things, spreading rumors, posting an

inappropriate photo or video, someone not leaving someone else alone, or someone making threatening remarks. It is aggressive behavior that is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power. The imbalance can be the social status, age, or even physical size of the perpetrator.

## The first step to helping your student is to be a *good listener* and talk through the problem without interruption.

Let students know when and where your conversation is going to take place. Here, we provide some tips and strategies to help you have an initial, successful conversation for some of most frequently reported problems of bullying.



### step | one

#### Set yourself up for a successful conversation with your student.

- 1. Take your student seriously.** If your student wants to talk to you about a bullying situation or something that happened that made them upset, take it seriously. Make sure you find a time to talk with the student that same day, if you are unable at the time you heard about the incident. Your ability to listen to your student and understand their feelings and experiences means everything to your student. It is a basic human need to be heard and understood. Your student has come to you as a trusted adult to listen and help them solve a problem they are having.
- 2. Find the best time and place to have the conversation.** Find a private place to talk with your student so you will both be comfortable and your student will feel safe to talk freely.
- 3. Before you talk to your student, check in with your own feelings.** Empathize with your student. Recognize strong emotions you may have about the situation, and, most importantly, managing them before you talk with your child. Taking a deep breath, using positive “self-talk,” like saying to yourself, “I want the best for my student so I will remain calm when we talk” can help you get into the right mindset so the conversation stays positive. Imagine how you would feel if the situation had happened to you.
- 4. Remember, you are the role model.** Your student is learning the best and worst ways to respond to challenging situations from you. Feelings are contagious. By staying calm, your student will more likely be calm and learn how to deal with challenging situations. If you notice you are upset and not sure you can be calm, hold off until you feel ready to have the conversation.

## step | two

**Talk with your student about the problem. The first step to helping your student is to be a good listener and talk through the situation.**

**1. Give your student unconditional support.** No matter what has happened, let your student know you will listen to them. Allow your student to get out the full story without interrupting or criticizing them. Your student needs to feel emotionally safe in order to be open and honest with you. Reassure your student that you will help them try to resolve the problem.

- Find out whether the student has told their parents. If not, ask why they haven't told them. Ask the student if they would like to tell them together.

Some key points to guide your initial conversation:

- Be a good listener; avoid putting words into your student's mouth or jumping to conclusions.
  - Use a calm and steady voice throughout the conversation. Avoid using harsh or accusatory language, which can result in your student either shutting down or becoming more upset.
  - Avoid being judgmental or critical about what behavior they were engaged in before the incident.
  - Avoid comments like, "I thought I told you not to be friends with {aggressor's name}" or "Let's not make a big deal about this – bullying is just a stage every kid goes through."
  - Avoid blaming your student for being the target of bullying. Assure them that their bullying experience was not their fault.
  - Avoid giving advice based on the way you feel about the incident.
  - Never encourage the student to 'fight back' against the child who is bullying. That could result in the target getting in trouble, suspended, or expelled from school.
  - Avoid making promises you can't keep, but do reassure your student that you want to help find a successful resolution to the problem, and that you will do your best to make sure their life doesn't get more difficult. You should avoid talking about what will happen to the bully, as well.
- 2. Use gentle exploration and empathy.** Often kids who are targets of bullying, or other mean behavior have a hard time talking about it. Our sample conversation starters will help you to find out what happened, how your student feels about it, and what they might want to do. Be sure to tell your student that the reason you are asking questions is because you need all the facts so that you can help them best solve the problem.
- If the incident happened on Facebook, ask the student to bring in a screen shot of the post or photo so you can look at it together and also record the incident.
  - Every report deserves an empathic conversation whether or not it falls into the category of bullying. Nevertheless, it will be helpful for your student to understand the difference between rude, mean, and bullying behaviors.
    - Rude behavior is when someone says or does something in a rough or harsh way, usually by mistake, that hurts someone's feelings. Some examples are saying something harsh about a friend or dismissing someone.
    - Mean behavior is saying or doing something to purposefully hurt someone once or maybe twice; some examples are: twisting the facts, blaming someone else when it is your wrongdoing (psychological manipulation); calling names or other put downs; insulting someone's family or anything about them.
    - Bullying behavior is aggressive behavior that is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power. Imbalance can be the social status, age, or even physical size of the perpetrator.
  - As most educators know, rude and mean behaviors can be very hurtful, but are generally handled differently than bullying. Rude and mean behaviors may be handled directly by classroom teachers, with or without the help of school counselors. Of course, all conflicts need to be addressed, but in most schools only bullying behaviors, i.e., those that intend to harm a child are reported and governed by school policy.

### Check out our Conversation Starters:

- “(Student’s Name), I’m so sorry this happened to you, and I’m glad you told me. Can you tell me more about what happened? Is this the first time or has this happened before?” And, most importantly, “How are you feeling?”
- “(Student’s Name), that sounds upsetting I can understand why you are feeling angry, afraid, sad, embarrassed. Let’s go find a quiet place so we can talk privately.”
- “(Student’s Name), I’m so glad you told me. You did the right thing – I promise I will do my best to help you manage this.”
- “(Student’s Name), Bullying is not ok. I know it’s difficult for you to talk about it. I really want to help you figure out what to do.”

### If your student is being threatened you might say something like the following, but always consult school policies:

- “(Student’s Name), it’s never ok for someone to threaten you. I’m really glad you came to me. Let’s talk through this with XYZ so we can make sure you are safe, and that you feel safe too and get the best possible help.”

### If your student doesn’t want to do anything about it:

- Your student might not want to do anything because they are afraid of losing a friendship, escalating the situation, being bullied again, or are uncomfortable expressing themselves. Some kids don’t want to be seen as a “tattle tale” and are afraid of getting someone in trouble. It’s important to know if that is the reason your student does not want to do anything. Then, you can explain the difference between “tattling” and “telling and reporting”  
Tattling is about getting someone in trouble – usually when something is not dangerous. *Telling someone that you have been bullied isn’t tattling, it’s getting the necessary help you need to stop the bullying behavior and to ensure your own and others’ safety.*

### 3. Thoroughly investigate the incident, abiding by school’s policy.

Make sure you understand fully what happened by having separate conversations with all parties, including the target, the person accused of bullying, and any witnesses. Interviewing the person accused of bullying and target together, however, may cause additional stress for the target.

- Consult others at your school (e.g., social worker, psychologist, dean, principal) and/or your school’s policy about what to do next about both reporting and handling the incident.
- Provide on-going interventional support for all parties involved.
- Appoint a point person to check back on both the target and aggressor until certain that the situation is resolved.



## step | three

Work with your student on an action plan. Your action plan should follow your school's policy and be done in consultation with the school principal in addition to the school psychologist, social worker or counselor, if necessary.

### 1. Based on what you learned from exploring the situation

— whether the behavior is classified as bullying or mean behavior — decide on the appropriate action that aligns with your school's policy.

- If the incident warrants reporting, remind your student about your school's policies and do what ever is necessary to ensure all students are safe and getting their needs met.
- If there is any reason to believe the student is in danger, report the incident immediately to an authority figure in your school. Make sure the student who was the target of bullying is safe until the situation has been handled by the authorities.
- If appropriate, you can facilitate a conversation or a mediation session where the perpetrator apologizes to the target.

**2. If you and your student agree** — after consulting your school's policy — that the incident is not too serious and does not need to be reported, you can work on an action plan with your student. For example, if the student is upset that they were not invited to a party, you can do your best to comfort the student, but the student should know that there likely won't be any consequences for the student they said was bullying them by leaving them out of the party.

### 3. If the bullying has moved online let your student know actions are available on Facebook.

Show your student what is available on Facebook:

(You can let your students know about Facebook's social reporting tools choose to do one or more of the following.)

- **Use the "Report" link.** Facebook will review the post or photo and if it violates Facebook terms, it will be removed. *(Private. Person who wrote the post or uploaded the photo is alerted that it has been taken down, but is not told who alerted Facebook to the violation.)*
- **Contact the person directly,** either on or off Facebook, but only if you feel it is safe and comfortable to do so. *(Private. This message will only be viewed by yourself and the person you are reaching out to.)*

- **Get help from a trusted friend or adult, either on or off Facebook so you are supported in how to handle the situation.** You can share the post with them confidentially. *(Private between you and the person you have messaged.)*
- **Unfriend the person by adjusting your privacy settings.** The person is removed from your "Friends" list and you won't be able to see each other's News Feeds. If your privacy setting is "public," it may still be possible to see their content, and they may be able to see your content. *(Person is not alerted that they have been "unfriended," but if they attempt to visit your profile, it will be clear that you are no longer connected.)*
- **Block the person.** The person cannot start a conversation with you, or see your posts. *(Person will not be alerted that they have been blocked, but you will no longer be able to find each other's profiles through search.)*

Show your student Facebook's new Anti-bullying hub where she/he can get more information and learn some strategies and words that might be helpful in managing the bullying situation.

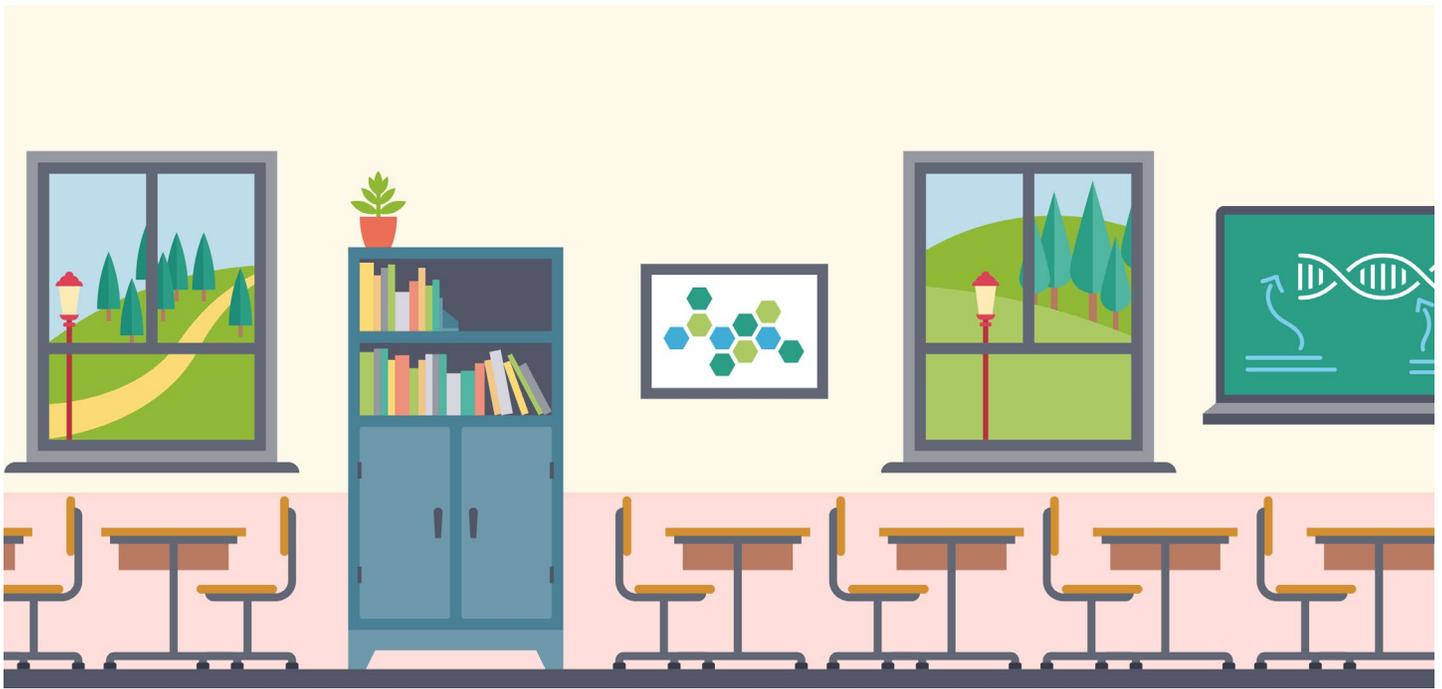


## step | four

Follow up with your student to ensure they feel both physically and emotionally safe in your classroom. Here are some questions for you to consider to maintain the safety of a student who was bullied, and to create a healthy school climate.

- 1. Has it been resolved?** Does your student feel that the situation she/he came to you with, has been resolved. Does your student need more help or guidance? It's critical to check-in with the student regularly about how their relationship is with the student who engaged in the bullying behavior.
- 2. Does the student feel comfortable in your classroom and at school?** How often does this student have to interact with the student who bullied them? Can that be adjusted?
- 3. Has the child who engaged in bullying behavior received support?**
- 4. Are the students involved in the incident in need of mental health support or services,** in your opinion – like your school counselor, or an outside referral?
- 5. Does your student have a support network of friends and family?** Have you encouraged the student to reach out to people she/he trusts?
- 6. Have you developed norms around acceptable behaviors in your classroom?**
- 7. Are you teaching direct lessons on social and emotional learning,** particularly on how emotions and actions impact relationships? How are you concretely promoting positive relationships in your classroom (e.g., do you encourage morning greetings, questions about well being, compliments?) Are you teaching children conflict resolution skills?





## How to respond when *your student* have been the perpetrator of bullying behaviors.

### If you find out your student was the perpetrator of bullying behaviors, what would you say or do?

**Safety first!** Make sure the target, the perpetrators, and bystanders are safe. Once safety has been established, separate conversations with all parties can begin. School policies must be followed.

Ideally, your school has adopted an evidence-based approach to social and emotional learning so that students are developing the necessary life skills of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and conflict resolution. If not, addressing a bullying incident is a good time to explore bringing a social and emotional learning program to your school.

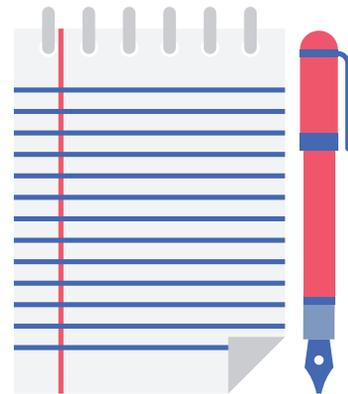
It's also important to set up a clear system for reporting. Let the students know when and how to report issues of bullying. Do you have a reporting box? Can reports be anonymous? Let students know when and where your conversation is going to take place.

Here, we provide tips and strategies to help you have an initial, successful conversation for some of most frequent forms of bullying. Bullying comes in many forms, which can take place at home, school or online, including someone saying mean things, spreading rumors, posting an inappropriate photo or video, someone not leaving someone else alone, or someone making threatening remarks. When helping your student, before taking action, it is important to be a good listener and talk through the problem. You can also refer to the Bullying Prevention Hub's Parents and Teen resources for more information.

## step | one

### Set yourself up for a successful conversation with your student.

- 1. Take your student seriously.** If your student wants to talk to you about a bullying situation, take it seriously. Make sure you find a time to talk with the student that same day, if you are unable at the time you heard about the incident. Your ability to listen to your student and understand their feelings and experiences means everything to your student. It is a basic human need to be heard and understood.
- 2. Find the best time and place to have the conversation.** Find a private place to talk with your student so you will both be comfortable and your student will feel safe to talk freely.
- 3. Before you talk to your student, check in with your own feelings.** This includes recognizing the strong emotions you may have about the situation, and, most importantly, managing them before you talk with your child. Taking a deep breath, using positive “self-talk,” like saying to yourself, “I want the best for my student so I will remain calm when we talk” or “I need to make clear decisions, and I need to calm down in order to best do that” can help you get into the right mindset so that the conversation stays positive. Even one word, or brief phrases can be effective: “breathe, calm” “calm, ease”. And – put yourself in your kids shoes: Imagine how you would feel if the situation had happened to you.
  - If you are having strong emotions and feel like you might say something to your student that puts down their character or something else you might regret in your role as teacher, pause and avoid responding until you are calmer. If you do respond in an emotion-driven way and you do regret what you said to your student it’s important to remember that everyone makes mistakes. This challenging moment presents an opportunity to help your student develop empathy, learn how to apologize with authenticity, and learn healthier ways to treat others.
- 4. Remember, you are the role model.** Your student is learning about the best and worst ways to respond to challenging situations - like bullying - from watching you. Remember, your student is watching you and how you respond – how you respond to a difficult moment may be etched in your students mind for years. Your feelings are contagious. If you stay calm, your students will more likely be calm and learn how to deal with challenging situations effectively. If you notice you are still upset and not sure you can stay calm while talking to your student, hold off until you feel ready to have the conversation.



## step | two

Talk with your student about the problem. The first step to helping your student is to be a good listener and talk through the situation.

**1. Give your student support.** No matter what has happened, let your student know you will listen to them. Allow your student to get out the full story without interrupting or criticizing them. Your student needs to feel emotionally safe in order to be open and honest with you. Reassure your student that you will help them try to resolve the problem.

- You likely will have judgments about what happened, especially if your student disappointed you with their mean behavior. However, it is important for you not to express those judgments in a critical way. Try your best not to say things like, “What’s wrong with you?” Rather, say something like “I am disappointed that this happened. This is serious – it is not ok for you or anyone else to spread rumors/say mean things/threaten, etc.”

**2. Find out what happened.** Find out exactly what happened, how long it has been happening, and if anything has happened after it has been reported. Your background knowledge of your student’s relationship with the child who was bullied, could influence how you discuss and handle the situation.

Some key points to guide your initial conversation include:

- Be a good listener; don’t put words into your student’s mouth or jump to conclusions. Be careful about giving advice based on the way YOU feel about the incident – it may be very different than what your student feels.
- Use a calm and steady voice throughout the conversation. Avoid using harsh or accusatory language, which can result in your student either shutting down or becoming more aggressive.
- Avoid being judgmental or critical about what behavior they were engaged in before the bullying incident. (This doesn’t mean that you give up your own assessment that the behavior was wrong.)
- Calmly let your student know that even if it’s a first time offense, bullying is unacceptable and consequences may be severe.
- Avoid making promises you can’t keep, but do reassure your student that you want to help find a successful resolution to the problem, and that you will do your best to make sure their school life doesn’t get more difficult.

**3. Communicate your school’s values and policies.** Let your student know that bullying behavior is unacceptable and that there will be consequences. Remind your student of key values like kindness, respect, and empathy, why they are important in every community and how it is each individual’s responsibility to behave in a way that reflects these values.

Use these conversation starters if you find out from someone else that your student has been engaging in bullying behavior:

- “(Student’s Name), tell me about what’s been happening between you and X.”

If no response, then state the following. “If you have a copy of the post or photo, it’s best to bring it with you.”

- “(Student’s Name), I heard that you have been saying mean things/posted this about X. I’m very disappointed to hear this. It’s not ok to intentionally hurt someone else and you must stop immediately. Tell me exactly what happened so we can figure out the best way to handle this.”

Use these conversation starter if your student discloses to you that they have been engaging in bullying behavior:

- “(Student’s Name), it took courage for you to tell me this when you know how upsetting it would be for me to hear it and when you know that there will be consequences. It’s never ok to say mean things/spread rumors/etc. Let’s sit down and talk through the situation so we can figure out the best way to handle this.”

If you find out the situation involved psychological harm or physical threats to another person:

You will want to take immediate action after hearing your student’s side of the story because everyone’s safety is priority. For incidents that involve a threat to someone’s physical safety, sexual harassment, discrimination or an offensive image or recording, the conversation starter below can help you begin the longer discussion with the student who posted the offending, upsetting message or photo

**4. Thoroughly investigate the incident, abiding by school's policy.** Make sure you understand fully what happened by having separate conversations with all parties, including the student who engaged in the threatening/disrespectful behavior, the target, and any witnesses.

- Avoid bringing the target and 'perpetrator' together so that the target does not experience additional stress. (Of course, if the target asks to talk directly to the 'perpetrator,' consider bringing them together with the help of a school counselor.)
- Consult others at your school (e.g., social worker, psychologist, Dean, principal) and/or your school's policy about what to do next about both reporting and handling the incident.

**5. Stay firm.** If your student begs you not to do anything, or does not want to do anything, let them know that their behavior is not acceptable and that there will be consequences. Let them know that these consequences were created to value and protect everyone in the school community. It is critical that you follow through with whatever consequences were set depending on the severity of the incident.



## step | three

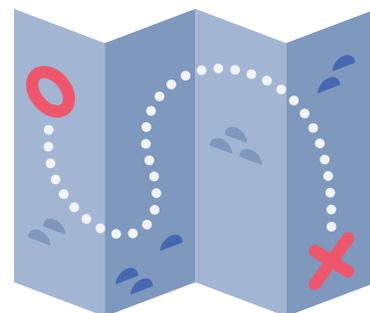
**Create a plan with your student to take responsible action. Your action plan should follow your school's policy and be done in consultation with the school principal in addition to the school psychologist, social worker or counselor, if necessary.**

**1. Based on what you learned from exploring the situation,** decide on an action that aligns with your school's policy.

- If you determine that the incident **does not** require reporting, work with your student on the best way they can apologize. Decide whether your student can do it alone, or if they need your guidance to write the language for an authentic, meaningful apology. Also, if appropriate, and you are trained to do so, facilitate a conversation or a mediation session where you and the perpetrator come to a decision about a type of restorative justice action to make amends with the target. This does not have to involve contact between the target and the perpetrator.
- If relevant, show your student how to take down the post using the Facebook Reporting System.
- If the incident **requires** reporting do whatever is necessary to ensure all parties are safe and getting their needs met. Involve parents according to your school's policy. You also can recommend the Facebook Family Safety Center to families for some helpful tips.

- If there is any reason to believe that a student is in danger, report the incident immediately to an authority figure in your school. Make sure the student who was the target of bullying, the perpetrator, and any bystanders are safe until the situation has been handled by the authorities.

**2. Be clear about the consequences and follow through.** If the behavior violates school policy, ensure consequences are aligned with the policy, including family involvement. If the behavior does not violate school policy, ideally you have classroom expectations for the way students treat each other, and will establish consequences in line with those expectations.



## step | four

Follow up with your student to ensure they are safe, and feel safe, in your classroom. Here are some questions for you to consider in order to maintain the safety of a student who was bullied and to create a healthy school climate.

- 1. Has it been resolved?** Does your student need more help or guidance? It's critical to check-in with the student regularly about how their relationship is with the student who was targeted in the bullying behavior.
- 2. Does the student feel comfortable in your classroom and at school?** How often does this student have to interact with the other student who was involved? Can that be adjusted?
- 3. Has the child who engaged in bullying behavior received education and support?** It is important that the student engaging in bullying behavior, learn that there is another perspective, that of the target. This will begin to develop empathy.
- 4. Are the students involved in the incident in need of mental health support or services,** in your opinion – like your school counselor, or an outside referral?
- 5. Does your student have a support network of friends and family?** Have you encouraged the student to reach out to people she/he trusts?
- 6. Have you developed norms around acceptable behaviors in your classroom and in the school community?** Do you have a “Charter” that guides how students want to feel and what they will do to have those feelings each day? Do your students know about school policies and the consequences for violating them?
- 7. Are you teaching direct lessons on social and emotional learning,** particularly on how emotions and actions impact relationships? How are you concretely promoting positive relationships in your classroom (for example: do you encourage morning greetings, questions about well being, compliments?) Are you teaching children conflict resolution skills?

Use these phone conversation starters if your student has been the target of bullying and you need to speak with their parent:

- “Hello (Mr./Mrs. parent’s name ), first, your daughter/son is fine! Are you free to talk for a few minutes now? I am calling to let you know of a conflict that she/he was a part of. Daughter/son has reported that his classmate/schoolmate was unkind and disrespectful to her/him – in fact, she/he is feeling bullied by this student. I know that this is upsetting to hear. Please know that our highest

priority is the safety and well being of your daughter/son and all our students. We have a no tolerance policy against bullying behavior and other kinds of disrespect in our school. I would like to tell you all the specifics and talk about how we, together, can best help (student’s name). It’s preferable to talk about this in person – can you come in in the next few days? In the meantime, I want to reassure you that we will follow the school guidelines for managing this conflict and we will do everything we can to help (student’s name) to feel safe and cared for by the school community.”

Then, when the parent comes in, repeat that your priority is the safety and well-being of all children. Tell the parent what their child reported and what other information you have about what actually happened. Of course, do not reveal personal information about the child who exhibited the bullying behavior. Assure the parent that you have spoken to their child, and will continue to talk (student’s name) to be sure she/he feels safe -- and, to be sure that the situation is resolved. Beyond that, you will check in with your child on a regular basis so that he knows you are there supporting her/him.



Use these phone conversation starters if your student has been a perpetrator of bullying and you need to speak with their parent:

- “Hello (Mr./Mrs. parent’s name ), first, your daughter/son is fine! Are you free to talk for a few minutes now? I am calling to let you know of a conflict that she/he was a part of. I have learned from (student’s name) that your daughter/son engaged in hurtful behavior. In fact, the student reported being bullied by your daughter/son. I can imagine that this is upsetting to hear. We can talk about the specifics of the situation later, but, we want you to know that our highest priority is the safety and well-being of all our students. We want to work with you to develop a pro-social plan for your daughter/son to support them in less aggressive behaviors.”

When appropriate, please add: “While we want all students, your child included to feel supported, there is a no tolerance policy in our school, with specific consequences for bullying behavior. I would like to talk to you in person about what happened and how we, together, can best help (student’s name). Can you find a time to come in in the next few days? In the meantime, I want to reassure you that we will follow the school

guidelines for managing this conflict and we will do everything we can to help (student’s name) feel safe and supported in the school community. We care about his well being and want to understand both what triggers this behavior for (student’s name) and what we can do together to prevent him from engaging with other students like this, in the future.”

Then – when the parent comes in, repeat that your priority is the safety and well being of all children. Tell the parent what their child is accused of/ was seen doing and any other information you have about what actually happened. Of course, do not reveal personal information about the target – except to say that the child was very upset. Assure the parent that you have spoken to their child, and will continue to talk (student’s name) to be sure he understands that her/his behavior that she/ he can make different choices, more pro-social choices, in the future. Do your best to be sure that the student understands that while there may be consequences for his behavior according to the school policy – her/his well being matters to us and we want to help him make more pro-social choices in the future.

---

## step | five

**Follow up with your student’s Parent, to ensure communications were clear and that everyone is on the same page about what to do to encourage the most positive outcome, here are some things you can discuss with your student’s parents:**



For the parent of the target:

- Check in weekly for the next month or two months to share observations about the student and how he is managing post –conflict – and, to ask if there are additional ways that you can support the student.
- Agree to look for opportunities in the school community and at home, on TV or the news, to discuss the reality that bullying behavior is unacceptable.
- If necessary suggest to the parent that he/she seek professional help for the student.

For the parent of the child engaged in bullying behavior:

- Check in weekly for the next month or two months to share observations about the student and how he is managing post –conflict – and, to ask if there are additional ways that you can support the student.
- Agree to look for opportunities in the school community and at home, on TV or the news, to discuss the reality that bullying behavior is unacceptable.
- Work with the parent to set up a plan help the student learn more about pro-social choices and empathy.
- If necessary suggest to the parent that he/she seek professional help for the student.

# Bullying Prevention

Check out the important tips below to help prevent or respond to bullying in your community.



## 1 Build and sustain a school climate focused on the respect & integrity of others.

- Empower students who witness online bullying to step up and tell a trusted adult.
- Invite students to be the ‘experts’ for peer mentoring to promote positive online interactions.
- Reinforce positive messaging in the classroom and with signage posted in the computer lab or each computer station.
- Create an environment where bullying of any kind isn’t “cool.” Make it clear to students, parents and staff that these behaviors are unacceptable and will be disciplined.
- Look for opportunities to teach/talk to students about bullying – for example: in literature, during recess.
- Remind students regularly to ask for help if they are dealing with an issue related to bullying or safety.
  - Let them know they can trust you, that you will listen to their concerns about online bullying and will take them seriously. You will do something about the problem and help get it resolved.
  - “Talk to me if you or someone you know is being electronically harassed or threatened! Online bullying is wrong and unacceptable and I will help you resolve the situation. I care about your online experience and can help!”

- Let students know that your school has policies created to protect everyone’s physical and emotional well-being. These policies have specific consequences for dealing with bullying and disrespectful behavior online.

## 2 Establish an effective Safety school policy.

- Consult with your school attorney BEFORE incidents occur to find out appropriate actions to take.
  - Make sure you understand what you can be held civilly liable for negligently preventing or improperly responding to bullying.
- Establish procedures that ensure the safety and protection of the targeted student.
- Clearly define bullying, harassment & intimidation
- Have an anonymous reporting system to allow students and teachers to report instances of bullying without fear of reprisal.
- Develop a formal procedure for investigating incidents of bullying.
- Develop a continuum of disciplinary consequences for bullying incidents, both at school and online. Let student know the consequences.
- School Internet technology should include site-blocking and content monitoring software/hardware.
- Know when the school can intervene and provide consequences in bullying incidents.

- If a student violated the schools technology use policy by using school-based technology to bully another student.
- If off campus incidents result in substantial disruption of the learning environment.
- If the incident doesn't fall under the school's purview parents should be alerted.
- Have a formal relationship with a local law enforcement department capable of conducting computer and network forensic examination should the need arise.

**3 Assess the scope of bullying at your school to determine whether or not it is a significant problem.**

- How many students have been bullied, or have bullied others?

**4 Make sure your school has an Internet Safety Educational program.**

- Students learn
  - Acceptable computer and internet safety
  - Safe password protection
  - How to recognize bullying
  - How to respond to bullying
- Provide staff training on how to recognize and intervene in bullying issues.
  - Designate classroom time for the topic of bullying.
- Educate your school community about responsible Internet use.
  - Raise awareness through sessions like assemblies, in-class discussions.
  - Invite specialists to talk to staff and students.
  - Sponsor a community education event.
  - Provide referral resources & tip-sheets on responding to bullying to the families.

