

PREVENTING BULLYING IN EARLY EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS

Presentation Materials Packet
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Welcome!

This packet is a complement to the PowerPoint presentation, “Preventing Bullying in Early Education Environments: Evidence-Based Practices for Teachers.” It is recommended that you read through this packet before beginning the PowerPoint presentation. These resources, combined with the corresponding annotated bibliography, “A Review of Research on Bullying Behaviors in School Settings,” were designed to provide early childhood educators with a clear understanding of what bullying is, how bullying affects children, and how teachers can prevent and address bullying in early education environments.

In this packet, you will find:

- A case study which will introduce a typical example of how bullying behaviors can present in an early education environment.
- A summary of the relevant research findings and recommendations from the articles included in the annotated bibliography.
- An introduction to the PowerPoint presentation.
- A list of children’s literature, resource books, and other materials that may support your efforts to prevent and address bullying in your classroom.

Preschool Bullying: A Vignette

Miss Marla is the lead teacher in a preschool classroom in a state-accredited child care facility. She provides care and educational programming for eighteen four- and five-year-olds with the support of two full-time co-teachers, Miss Greta and Mr. Julian. Miss Marla has a strong background in child development and she works hard to create developmentally appropriate curriculum that will prepare her students for Kindergarten according to her state's learning standards. Spring is approaching and she feels confident that by the end of the summer, her Kindergarten-bound students will be academically prepared for the transition. However, she and her co-teachers have been observing some concerning behaviors among the students over the past several months.

Sasha, a five-year-old boy in the class, has struggled throughout the entire year to develop friendships with his peers. He enjoys playing superhero games on the playground and in the Small Blocks Area, which is an interest he shares with several of his peers. Unfortunately, Sasha has difficulty negotiating roles for playing superheroes with his peers. When peers have play ideas that differ from his own, he becomes visibly angry, and tends to engage in yelling and physical aggression. This pattern has contributed to many children's hesitancy to play with Sasha, despite his efforts to engage them in play. Some of the children have begun to say things to each other such as, "Come on, let's get away from Sasha," and, "Don't play with him, he's too weird!" when Sasha approaches them to play.

Additionally, a peer group of six girls has formed over the year. The girls don't always play as a group of six, but three of them – Constance, Grace and Dipti – tend to stay together during free play times, while the other three – Sammie, Anna and Autumn – move in and out of playing with the group throughout each day. Anna and Grace were experiencing frequent conflicts in November, refusing to share toys, calling each other hurtful names, and occasionally physically harming each other. The two girls have since drifted apart and appear to prefer playing with other peers, but Grace has begun excluding Anna from joining in any play, and the other girls in the peer group are participating in the exclusion. Sammie and Autumn include Anna in play when Grace isn't there, but they follow Grace's lead and exclude her if Grace is participating in play.

Both Sasha and Anna have shown signs of increased sensitivity in the past couple months, becoming more emotionally reactive and attempting to gain attention from teachers more than in the past. Miss Marla, Miss Greta and Mr. Julian have tried to talk to the other children individually to understand why they are excluding Sasha and Anna, but they are uncomfortable bringing the issue up as a class because they fear it would put an even bigger target on the isolated children. The class as a whole appears to be affected by these emerging dynamics as well – the teachers have noticed an increase in verbal teasing, exclusionary play, and physical aggression among many of the children. They want to stop any further development of bullying behaviors before it spirals completely out of control.

Summary of Relevant Findings and Recommendations

Though the behaviors described in Miss Marla's classroom are typical for many early education environments, they can have a powerful and detrimental influence on children's opportunities to learn and develop in the classroom. Sasha's aggression and difficulty with cooperative play and conflict resolution were affecting his social status in the classroom. His peers began to exclude and verbally disparage him as a result. Anna and Grace were experiencing some hardships that are common between young friends, but Grace's social influence allowed their dynamic to affect Anna's relations with her entire core peer group. The other girls were unable to manage the situation without picking a side, which resulted in a contagious culture of exclusion within the classroom.

Below, you will find a brief review of the findings and recommendations that were applied to generate the PowerPoint presentation. This information is crucial for teachers, so that they are able to prevent, recognize and address bullying behaviors before they become an influential element in the classroom. Please refer to the annotated bibliography for more detailed descriptions of the information that is most interesting or pertinent to your own work.

What does bullying look like?

Bullying occurs most often in the form of verbal abuse. It can also present as physical assaults, harassment, threats and intimidation (Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005).

Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) group bullies into four types: physical, verbal, relational and reactive. Physical bullies are typically boys who use direct bullying behaviors including hitting and kicking. Verbal bullies victimize through the use of hurtful words. Relational bullies are typically girls who persecute their victims by swaying other peers to ostracize them. Reactive bullies instigate fights with peers and often argue self-defense when they are caught by adults.

Who is involved in bullying?

One in four children in the country is bullied and one in five children describe themselves as a bully (Whitted & Dupper, 2005)

Bullies perform bullying behaviors, victims are the targets of bullying behaviors, and bully victims both exhibit and experience bullying behaviors (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010).

Peer bystanders are those who witness bullying behaviors (Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005).

How does bullying affect children?

Victims of bullying are more likely to have low self-concept, low levels of prosocial and socially skilled behaviors, and exhibit both internalizing behaviors (such as social withdrawal, depression and anxiety) and externalizing behaviors (such as verbal and physical aggression). Peer victimization is also associated with low school enjoyment, perceived threats to safety in school, school avoidance and low academic achievement. Additionally, peer victimization can affect students' social statuses, as it is associated with low peer acceptance and high peer rejection (Card & Hodges, 2008; Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005).

Bullies tend to exhibit externalizing behaviors and social competence, experience internalizing symptoms, difficulty with social problem-solving and academic challenges, and hold negative attitudes and beliefs about others and themselves. They are also more likely believe the school atmosphere is negative, be negatively influenced by community factors and peers, and live in homes characterized by poor parental monitoring and conflict (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). Bullies are less likely to complete school, more likely to commit crimes later in life, more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, and more likely to exhibit other delinquent behaviors (Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005).

Bully victims typically exhibit both internalizing and externalizing behaviors, view themselves negatively, lack social skills, experience academic difficulties, be rejected by peers, and be negatively influenced by peers (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010).

Peer bystanders often report that witnessing bullying makes them feel unpleasant and even worry that they will also become a victim (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

What can teachers do to prevent and address bullying?

Teachers, administrators, students and parents should be trained to recognize and address peer victimization appropriately, and a **culture of safety and respect** among school members should be fostered in classrooms. Individual-oriented treatments are discouraged but when necessary, such **interventions should be based on empirically authenticated evidence** (Card & Hodges, 2008).

Teachers should be cognizant of social groups in their classrooms, the most influential student within those social groups, and the children that tend to support these social leaders. This information can assist teachers in developing effective **proactive, classroom-wide strategies for the prosocial engagement** of socially prominent aggressive children who are at-risk of becoming bullies (Cook et al., 2010).

Peer acceptance and **high friendship quality** are believed to be protective factors against victimization. A child's **sense of belonging** within the school is negatively related to her likelihood to experience victimization and engage in bullying. Students are more likely to seek help when witnessing bullying if they believe that teachers will effectively intervene to stop the situation. **Teachers who are more involved in students' academic and social lives are perceived as creating safer learning environments by students. Increased supervision** in the school, **improved classroom management, teacher trainings, reinforced classroom rules, school-wide bullying policies, and an emphasis on cooperative group work in classrooms are recommended** (Hong & Espelage, 2012).

Peers' **ability to cope** when witnessing bullying is an important factor related to their actual response to bullying in schools. **Interventions should focus on communication skills, optimistic thinking, goal-setting, problem-solving, decision making and time management.** Additionally, interventions should be administered in **early school years** utilizing programs that promote staff involvement and school-wide commitment (Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005).

Teachers should aim to develop a **classroom culture of respect and recognition** in which bullying becomes unnecessary because the students develop prosocial, compensatory skills for **coping with conflicts**. It is recommended that teachers **reach out to victims, define clear expectations and consequences for bullying, increase adult supervision in all school environments, empower students to react to bullying by leading class discussions and lessons on coping skills, and urge all adults involved to invest themselves in the importance of the culture of the school community** (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

School climate plays an important function for the incidence of bullying. **Positive, connective school climates** are likely to buffer against risk factors such as poor parenting and negative peer influences, and **positive school bonding** has also been identified as a buffer against negative influences on bullying behaviors. Additionally, the **level of teacher supervision** in a school can impact students' perception of their safety at school (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010).

Bullying interventions should focus on developing aspects of **collective efficacy**, particularly **cohesion and trust**, among members of the school community (Williams & Guerra, 2011).

References

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Introduction to **PREVENTING BULLYING IN EARLY EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS** PowerPoint Presentation

The purpose of this presentation is to translate current research findings and recommendations into practical strategies which early childhood educators can utilize to prevent and address bullying behaviors in their classrooms.

You may view the presentation as a slideshow in full-screen mode, using the right arrow key or left-clicking your mouse to navigate.

Later, print or review the notes section on each slide for additional links and resources. For best results, select "Notes Pages" and "Pure Black and White" under Print Settings.

Topics of Focus:

Creating a Culture of Respect and Safety
Promoting Collective Efficacy
Building Friendship Skills
Problem Solving Strategies
Effective Teacher Behaviors
Empowering Children to Cope with Bullying

Literature and Classroom Materials

Books Referenced in the PowerPoint Presentation:

You Can't Come to My Birthday Party!
Conflict Resolution with Young Children
by Betsy Evans

One
by Kathryn Otoshi

Have You Filled a Bucket Today?
by Carol McCloud

Other Bully-Related Children's Literature:

Jungle Bullies
by Steven Kroll

Two and Zero
by Kathryn Otoshi

The Tease Monster
by Julia Cook

The Recess Queen
by Alexis O' Neill

Don't Laugh at Me
by Steve Seksin

The Bully Blockers Club
by Teresa Bateman

Stop Picking on Me: A First Look at Bullying
by Pat Thomas

Turtle Technique

- ✓ Turtle Puppet
- ✓ Hand-written or typed list of steps with pictures for beginning-readers.

Robin, A., Schneider, M., & Dolnick, M. (1976). The turtle technique: An extended case study of self-control in the classroom. *Psychology in the Schools, 13*(4), 449-453.

Peace Stick

- ✓ Sturdy, 10-12" plastic or wooden stick/rod (rhythm sticks work well)
- ✓ Leather rope
- ✓ Beads
- ✓ Faux fur
- ✓ Glue

Classroom Bucket

- ✓ Large bucket
- ✓ Colorful strips of paper
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Tape or Stapler

Alone Space

An alone space is best suited for a quiet corner in the classroom where one child can relax, read, listen to music on headphones, or explore items that provide comfort. Consider providing:

Pillows
Soft toys
Fidget toys
Relaxing CDs with headphones

Beautiful trinkets
Sensory toys
Photo album with family pictures
Comfortable seating