



Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

Bullying

Educators are often overlooked as potential victims of bullying and violence and bullying procedures tend to focus on the student population. The reality is that violence directed at educators is an unfortunate reality for those working within the education system (Espelage et al., 2013), and bullying directed toward educators is emerging as an area of concern (Debarbieux, 2003). These events can include disrespectful behaviour, verbal threats, and physical assault. Exclusion and sexual harassment can also be considered forms of bullying.



Why is it important?

- Workplace bullying is associated with poor mental health outcomes among teachers (Bernotaite & Malinauskiene, 2017).
- Learner-to-teacher bullying has negative consequences not just for teachers but the teaching profession, as it impacts the quality of education that learners experience (Le Mottee & Kelly, 2017).
- Whole-school anti-bullying initiatives can alter attitudes toward bullying and result in increased reporting and intervention in bullying incidents from students and teachers (Valle et al., 2020).

In Practice

School staff must feel safe to do their job effectively. School leaders can address bullying concerns by developing policies and procedures that support both students and staff with regards to bullying victimization and perpetration.



What can schools do?

Schools should adopt a formal structure to address bullying by:

- Ensuring transparency among school staff around existing protocols for bullying incidents as well as anticipated improvements.
- Offering training programs that teach school personnel to understand, identify, and intervene appropriately when bullying occurs.
- Making sure that there are clear consequences for bullying which are consistently enforced.
- Establishing a formal tiered structure for threat management by identifying and tracking misbehaviours.



Leader Reflection

School leaders need to ensure that bullying policies are consistently reinforced and that victims are supported.

The following actions can be used to counter the threat of bullying and violence:

- Establish clearly defined procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing incidents of bullying, harassment, and workplace violence.
- Encourage staff to report incidents and provide appropriate support for those who have been victims of bullying, harassment, and violence.
- Provide additional training concerning sexual harassment and actively stop such behaviour when it occurs.
- Facilitate an inclusive work culture where individual differences are accepted, all staff have equal rights, and employees feel understood and supported.

References

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