

Bullying Prevention Strategies and Resources for K–12 Schools



Create safer school environments by preventing and addressing bullying.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

Bullying is a widespread issue in the United States and negatively impacts those who are bullied, those who bully others, bystanders, and others in the school community. Bullying can threaten students' physical and emotional safety at school and negatively impact their ability to learn. It is linked to many negative outcomes including impacts on mental health, substance use, and suicide, and in some instances can play a contributing role in school violence.



Bullying Prevention Strategies

While there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing bullying, there are a number of things school staff can do to make schools safer and prevent bullying. The first step is properly identifying bullying and taking actionable steps to prevent it. Reducing bullying behavior in schools requires a multi-faceted approach that also includes immediate response and appropriate consequences and support for serious incidents.

School-based programs that strengthen youths' skills and modify the physical and social environment have also been shown to reduce bullying or key risk factors. This includes the adoption of school climate initiatives and support for positive character development and digital citizenship.

Everyone at school can work together to create an environment where bullying is not acceptable. The following are **some** strategies school leaders, teachers, and staff can consider implementing to help identify, address, and prevent bullying in schools.



Develop and Implement an Assessment

Assessments – such as anonymous surveys – can help schools determine the frequency, locations, and types of bullying behavior. Assessments involve asking students and school community members about their experiences and thoughts related to bullying to help understand the current landscape, determine an appropriate intervention or prevention plan in response, and measure the results of efforts over time to ensure they are working.



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Build a Safe and Supportive Environment

Numerous studies have shown that elements of a positive school climate reduce bullying behaviors and lessen negative outcomes for students who have been bullied. Schools should establish a culture of inclusion that welcomes all students, set a tone of respect in classrooms, monitor places where bullying is more likely to occur such as bathrooms, playgrounds, and the cafeteria, and enlist the help of all school staff that interact with and influence students to help create an environment where bullying is not acceptable.



Implement Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves the processes through which children acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Research has shown that effective SEL in schools significantly improves students' social-emotional skills, attitudes about self and others, and social interactions, and can help prevent bullying. Implementation of school-wide SEL frameworks and teacher-led integration of SEL in classrooms are a few ways to include SEL into schools and help develop students' social and emotional skills.



Set Policies

Establishing and enforcing school policies that outline how students are expected to treat each other, and the consequences for violations of these policies, can help prevent bullying. School leaders should train teachers and staff on school policies, and give them the tools to respond to bullying consistently and appropriately.



Engage Parents and Youth

Parents and youth play a critical role in stopping bullying at school because they can inspire others and contribute to a positive school climate. Parents can get involved by volunteering or participating in school events, and students can offer their viewpoints and experiences with bullying, take leadership roles in school to promote respect and inclusion, and communicate about bullying prevention with their peers.

For additional information on these and other strategies to prevent and address bullying, visit [StopBullying.gov](https://www.stopbullying.gov).

Sources: [CDC.gov/violenceprevention](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention) | [SafeSupportiveLearning.ed.gov](https://www.safesupportivelearning.ed.gov) | [StopBullying.gov/prevention/assess-bullying](https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/assess-bullying) | [StopBullying.gov/prevention/build-safe-environment](https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/build-safe-environment) | [StopBullying.gov/prevention/engage-parents](https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/engage-parents) | [StopBullying.gov/prevention/rules](https://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/rules) | [StopBullying.gov/resources/research-resources](https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/research-resources) | [SafeSupportiveLearning.ed.gov/social-emotional-learning](https://www.safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/social-emotional-learning)



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Resources

SchoolSafety.gov offers a variety of resources, programs, and tools that school communities can use to address bullying, including:

- [Assessing Capacity for Bullying Prevention and Implementing Change](#): This evidence-informed and evidence-based resource package provides professionals working to prevent bullying with tools to assess their environment's current capacity to address bullying and to determine where there may be gaps and needs.
- [Bullying Surveillance Among Youths: Uniform Definitions for Public Health and Recommended Data Elements \(Version 1.0\)](#): This report helps organizations, researchers, evaluators, community groups, educators, and public health officials define and gather systematic data on bullying to better inform research and prevention efforts. It is intended to improve the consistency and comparability of data collected on bullying.
- [Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment in Our Nation's Classrooms](#): This training for teachers, school administrators, and support personnel is made up of two modules to address bullying in classrooms. Specifically, it is designed to assist teachers in cultivating meaningful relationships with students while creating a positive climate in the classroom.
- [KnowBullying Mobile App](#): This app provides information to help parents, caregivers, and educators start meaningful conversations with children, share successful bullying prevention strategies, recognize the signs of bullying, and support children who are being bullied.
- [Measuring Bullying Victimization, Perpetration, and Bystander Experiences: A Compendium of Assessment Tools](#): This compendium provides the school community with tools to measure a range of bullying experiences, including assessing self-reported incidents and the prevalence of bullying.
- [Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports Technical Assistance Center](#): This center supports schools, districts, and states to build systems capacity for implementing a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional, and behavioral support that can improve outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities and students from underrepresented groups.
- [Preventing Bullying](#): This website provides background information on bullying, including bullying statistics, as well as prevention strategies to stop bullying before it starts.
- [StopBullying.gov](#): This interagency website provides information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyberbullying is, who is at risk, and how schools and individuals can prevent and respond to bullying.
- [The Relationship Between Bullying and Suicide: What We Know and What it Means for Schools](#): This resource provides school administrators, teachers, and other school staff with concrete, action-oriented information based on the latest science to help improve schools' understanding of and ability to prevent and respond to bullying and suicide-related behavior.
- [Tips for Teachers on Cyberbullying](#): This webpage provides information for teachers, school personnel, and staff to identify warning signs a child is being cyberbullied or is cyberbullying, as well as strategies to prevent and address it.

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