TALKING ABOUT BULLYING: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION STARTERS

All years: Making distinctions between bullying and arguing

This discussion starter supports teachers to scaffold a collaborative discussion with students as a whole class or in small groups. The discussion requires about 20 minutes. It can be used as a stand-alone discussion or to conclude one of the other classroom discussion topics if time permits. (Refer to How to use for more information.)

Outline

1. Present the definition of bullying
   Share the definition of bullying with your students. Explain that this is how bullying is generally defined by society; however, in order to fully understand bullying, we need to unpack the ideas.

2. Create a Venn diagram through discussion
   Draw a Venn diagram on the board with two intersecting circles — label one circle ‘Bullying’ and the other ‘Arguing’. Students brainstorm similarities between the concepts — list these in the intersection of the diagram. Students brainstorm differences — list these in the outer areas of the circles.

   Students consider the completed Venn diagram and then complete the following statements:
   - Bullying and arguing can appear to be similar because …
   - Bullying and arguing are distinct because …

   Ask the students to consider the responses on the Venn diagram and discuss the following questions, giving reasons for their responses:
   - How does this help us to understand more about bullying?
   - Why is it sometimes possible to confuse arguing with bullying?
   - Why are these distinctions important when we are thinking about bullying?

   As appropriate and necessary, use any of these additional questions to explore the students’ answers:
   - Why do you think that? (justification)
   - Can anyone build on that idea?
   - Does anyone have an alternative suggestion/different possibility?
   - Can you clarify that?
   - Could there be another way to think about this?
   - What might someone say if they disagreed with this?
   - What might follow from this?

3. Reflect on thinking and learning
   At the conclusion of the activity, take five minutes to reflect on the learning:
   - How did we work as a community of learners?
   - What new thinking and learning has taken place for our class community today?
   - How can we apply this new thinking and learning to our relationships with peers at school and beyond.