

TALKING ABOUT BULLYING: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION STARTERS

All years: Ensuring school is safe for everyone

Steps to run the discussion

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 and consists of five steps. (Refer to [How to use](#) for more information.)

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. Choose one Inquiry question

Choose from one of the three Inquiry questions. Think about the current level of understanding and specific needs of your class when selecting the question.

Allow about 20 minutes for the discussion of one Inquiry question (including reflection). The Inquiry questions are designed to encourage students to think deeply about many issues surrounding the concept of bullying. Your students may come up with a variety of responses. As the students provide their responses, listen carefully and consider the key ideas underpinning these responses.

3. Ask students to provide justification for their answers

When students respond, it is essential that they always give reasons for their responses. Some questions may be grammatically closed (yes/no), but the student's justification for their response will enable the ideas presented to remain conceptually open for ongoing discussion. If students provide a 'yes/no' answer, ask: 'Why do you think that?'

The provision of justification enables all participants to gain a deeper understanding of the reasoning underpinning the responses. This in turn gives opportunity for students to build on the ideas of others, make considered connections and explore disagreement respectfully.

4. Use one or two appropriate Probing questions (more if you have longer than 20 minutes)

Use one or two appropriate probing questions to deepen the students' line of inquiry. The probing questions are based on the response, or you can use the general 'procedural' questions of inquiry. You can also use a probing question to encourage students to think about alternative perspectives.

5. Reflect on thinking and learning

At the conclusion of the discussion, 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?

Inquiry questions

Inquiry question: *How can we feel safe at school?*

Probing questions:

- What makes us feel safe at school?
- How can we feel safe online? How is this different?
- How can we help others to feel safe at school/online?
- If we know that someone is being bullied, what could we do?
- Should we care about the safety of others at school? Why do you think that?
- Do we have a responsibility to take action if we know bullying is taking place at school?

Inquiry question: *How can we stand together to ensure a safe classroom environment?*

Probing questions:

- What does it mean to 'stand together' against bullying?
- If class members do not stand together, what impact would this have on the classroom environment?
- Does everyone have a right to feel safe within the classroom, online and at school?
- Do we have a responsibility to stand together?
- In what ways could we stand together against bullying as a class community?
- What might happen to a community if some members choose not to take action against bullying?
- What measures can we take to prevent online bullying?
- How can students contribute to the school's approach to dealing with bullying?

Inquiry question: *How can we build peaceful communities? (consider this from a global perspective)*

Probing questions:

- What does a peaceful community look/sound/feel like?
- Why do we need peace within a community?
- What disrupts the peace within a community?
- What role does emotion play in the disruption of peace?
- What factors contribute to the building of peace within a community?
- In what ways could peace within local communities contribute to a more peaceful world?
- How can we ensure that our online connections contribute to peace within our world?

Additional probing questions (procedural questions)

- Why do you think that? (justification)
- Can anyone build on that idea?
- How are these ideas connected?
- In what ways are these ideas similar/different?
- Does anyone have an alternative suggestion/different possibility?
- Can you clarify that?
- Could there be another way to think about this?
- Does anyone have a different reason?
- What might someone say if they disagreed with this?
- How can we know this is accurate/true?
- What might follow from this?
- Can you think of a time when that wouldn't be the case?