Handout Activity 2 – Students’ views on bullying

Why talk about bullying?

The National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence is held on the third Friday in March each year. This day is an opportunity for students, teachers, parents and the whole community to take a stand together against bullying and violence. This activity is part of the work being done across Australia to ‘take a stand together’ against bullying and violence in schools.

Bullying is an area where there are lots of different, and sometimes conflicting, ideas. People can have different ideas about what ‘bullying’ actually is. People also have different opinions about how serious bullying is and what needs to be done about it. Cutting through the myths and misconceptions about bullying can be challenging.

This activity asks students what they think about a number of ‘statements’ which may or may not be true about bullying. As senior students, you can talk to younger students to find out their views which will give the school a better understanding of the perspectives of students.

Some key facts about bullying

Bullying is something we hear about often both at school and in the workplace. However, people can hold quite diverse views on what bullying actually is. The definition of bullying agreed to by all state and territory departments is provided in this handout.

Bullying is something that impacts on lots of people. Bullying has negative impacts for students who are bullied, those who do the bullying and the students who witness it. While we agree we don’t want people to experience bullying, it can be challenging for schools to deal with it.

There are a number of factors that can impact on schools ensuring a safe and supportive school community where bullying and violence are not tolerated, including:

- Children and young people can view bullying differently from adults.
- Bullying can often occur in places or ways that are hidden from adults’ view.
- The underlying causes of bullying may be prejudicial attitudes that may not be discussed.
- Factors outside of school, including at home, in the community and in the wider society may have a big impact.
- While we know some important facts from research, numerous ‘generalisations’ or ‘assumptions’ about bullying persist that do not match with what research actually shows.

All of these issues mean that discussing bullying is very important. Research shows that the most effective approaches to bullying involve everyone in the school community. Hearing directly from students about their views on bullying can be a valuable part of a school’s approach to creating a safe and supportive school environment for all.
Steps for the activity

This activity involves you working in small groups to run a survey to students in your school and collate the findings into a short report or presentation. The survey uses statements that come from research, popular culture and the media.

The aim of your activity is to provide helpful information for other students (and for teachers) on a number of generalisations about bullying that may or may not be valid, and to develop a better understanding of bullying that includes students’ perspectives on bullying.

1. Determine groups and roles
Establish small groups and decide the various roles of students – group facilitator (who will make sure everyone contributes), scribe, spokesperson, etc.

2. Create your survey
Read the list of generalisation on the page called Statements. It has been developed specifically for use in your survey. Select up to 10 statements from the list.

To ensure your findings are a good representation of what students across the school really think, plan to survey a range of students – read the important information in the Guidelines for conducting surveys.

Decide how you will run your survey and then create your survey. Consider whether you will get better answers if you collect them through an anonymous process or in person. Options include:

- In person with individuals or through focus groups – make copies of your survey page.
- Leave the survey forms in a central location and advertise it to students – add the personal questions and other text mentioned in the Guidelines for conducting surveys and make copies.
- Online – Survey Monkey® https://www.surveymonkey.com/ is a useful tool for online surveys. It is easy and free to register a basic account to set up your survey, and you can generate a link to give to students (e.g. let them know via your school newsletter). With the basic account you can ask up to 10 questions. Students’ agree/disagree responses to all 10 statements can be included within a single question using the question type: Matrix of choices (one answer per row), allowing you to add questions for personal information. The survey tool collates and graphs the responses.

3. Run your survey
Allow time for students to complete the survey:

- For an online survey, about a week would be enough time for those who wish to take part to do so. Online survey tools will graph your results for you.
- For a survey run in person (with individuals or focus groups), you will talk with students in the break times. Depending on the number of participating students, you may need multiple sessions. You will need to allow time to manually collate all the responses.
- For a survey using forms left for students to complete, about a week should be sufficient. You will need to allow time to manually collate all the responses.

4. Collate and discuss the findings and create your presentation
Collate the findings and graph the results. Write up the findings for presentation.
Consider:

- Two or three key findings you want to highlight.
- Any issues in getting a representative sample of students. Whose voices may not have been heard?
- How you will share the results. Some options are:
  - Visual or spoken presentation on assembly
  - Web page Bullying Myth Busters for your school site
  - Brief report of findings and what this means for our school
  - Discussion with school staff and/or student groups.
- Whether you will suggest follow-up activities that you could do based on the findings.

5. **Present** your findings

**Personal Reflection**

At the end of the activity, you may like to reflect on the following questions.

- Did you learn anything new about yourself (or your classmates) in this activity?
- From your findings, how did you select what to highlight in your presentation?
- Were there any unexpected findings in your survey?

**Definition of bullying**

The national definition of bullying for schools, developed by educators across Australia as part of the National Safe Schools Framework, is:

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

Online bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies, e.g. the internet or mobile devices.

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

In short, bullying is an ongoing misuse of power involving a pattern of harmful verbal, physical or social behaviour.


Guidelines for conducting surveys

Planning for a representative sample of students to survey

Before you run your survey, you need to think about:

- Surveying a reasonable number of students given the school’s size in order to get a realistic idea of the range of views.
- How to avoid individual students completing the survey more than once.
- How to collect surveys from a sample that represents students from across the school.
- Whether more valid information can be collected through an anonymous process (such as an online survey) or in person (such as interviews or focus groups).

Your sample of students should match the features of your overall school enrolment. For example, if your school enrolment is 1000 students, in a mixed-sex school which features about 30% Indigenous students, you need to ensure you survey:

- About 10% or 100 students (25% would be ideal, but may be too time consuming).
- Students from across each Year level (roughly 15-20 from each Year level).
- Approximately 50 boys and 50 girls.
- At least 30 students with an Indigenous background.
- Any other important identifying information.

Therefore in your survey, you need to ask students some personal questions (demographic information). Keep these questions to a minimum, and only what you really need to know. **Do not collect names or information that would identify individuals.**

Some students may not wish to participate in the survey, which is their choice. Sometimes it is not possible to get a truly representative sample. In this case, you could mention this in your presentation.

What to say to students when you run the survey

Whether you run the surveys in person or create an online survey, before students decide to take part they need to be told:

- What you are investigating and why, e.g. use the rationale in this handout.
- What the national/school definition of bullying is.
- What to expect in the survey, e.g. *There are 10 statements for you to think about. Tick the box that indicates how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.*
- That their name will not be collected or used in your final presentation of findings.
- The reason you are collecting some personal details from the students, e.g. *We need to ask you for some personal information so we can be sure the survey findings provide a valid picture of what all students think about these statements about bullying.*

At the end of the survey thank participants and let them know when/where they can see the findings.
**Statements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN PLANNING THE SURVEY SELECT NO MORE THAN 10 FROM THIS LIST</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Getting bullied is a natural part of growing up; it’s character building.</td>
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<td>2. Cyberbullying is about getting a reaction, not about hurting people.</td>
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<td>3. What teachers call bullying is different from what students call bullying.</td>
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<td>4. The emotional impact of bullying is much worse that the physical impact.</td>
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<td>5. Whether bullying happens to a student depends on how well they fit into the social norms for that particular student group.</td>
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<td>6. People who bully others have low self-esteem and are rejected by other people.</td>
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<td>7. Once a ‘victim’ of bullying, always a victim.</td>
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<td>8. Boys mainly use physical bullying and girls mainly use social/relational bullying.</td>
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<td>9. Threats of suspension or exclusion will make students who bully others stop.</td>
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<td>10. The types of bullying that students do and experience varies with age.</td>
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<td>11. There are lots of support services for students who have been bullied or who think they might themselves be bullying other students.</td>
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<td>12. If you get bullied online, the best option is to bully the other person back.</td>
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<td>13. A diverse student group is more interesting and better for learning about life than a group where everyone is the same.</td>
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<td>14. There’s no point in students challenging other students who frequently use name-calling, racist or sexist slurs and personal insults.</td>
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<td>15. Students who bully other students often claim it’s a joke and that their ‘victim’ needs to just deal with it.</td>
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