

Power of peers

Bullying prevention in the digital age

Edited by Eeva-Liisa Markkanen and Juuso Repo



THE MANNERHEIM LEAGUE
FOR CHILD WELFARE



Co-funded by the European Union

Publisher

Youth Participation in Bullying Prevention -project

Coordinated by

Mannerheim League for Child Welfare

Toinen linja 17

00530 Helsinki

FINLAND

www.mll.fi/peersupport

Edited by

Eeva-Liisa Markkanen, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare

Juuso Repo, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare

Work group

Anna-Carin Wettfors, The Friends

Ülo Vihma, MTÜ TORE

Orsolya Táler, Kek Vonal

Katalin Szűcs, Kek Vonal

Stina Forsberg, Folkhälsan

Special thanks to

Youth Participation in bullying prevention -project's pilot schools:

Sydän-Laukaa School, Finland

Urheilupuisto School, Finland

Taivallahti School, Finland

Lagstad School, Finland

Kvarnby School, Sweden

Torslanda School, Sweden

Göteborgs Högre Samskola, Sweden

Adavere School, Estonia

Lustivere School, Estonia

Ilmatsalu School, Estonia

Tanext Akadémia, Szakképző iskola, Hungary

Közgazdasági Politechnikum, Alternatív Gimnázium és Szakközépiskola, Hungary

Kürt Alapítványi Gimnázium, Hungary

KiVa Antibullying Program / University of Turku, associate partner in the project

Viherlaakso School, Finland

Layout

Anu Tirkkonen

Pictures

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The work presented has been produced with the financial support of the Daphne Programme of the European Union. The contents are the sole responsibility of Mannerheim League for Child Welfare and its partners and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

About the project

This material is based on the work of five organisations and their programs in peer support, school well-being and bullying prevention. The organisations joined forces for a two-year European project co-funded by the Daphne Programme of the European Commission in 2015-2016. In all project countries, the partners worked with several pilot schools and further tested and developed the methodology presented here.

The material includes results from the data gathered in project pilot schools. It included student surveys and qualitative workshops with students and school staff. The quantitative results are based on survey results from the Finnish schools (n=998).



The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL), founded in 1920, is a nationwide NGO promoting children's right to a good and safe childhood. The League promotes the well-being of families with children by providing peer support and creating opportunities to participate in its 555 local associations. MLL has developed and coordinated the peer support scheme in Finland over 40 years. The scheme is used in 90 % of all Finnish primary schools. The scheme empowers young people to take responsibility and act in their schools to support well-being and prevent bullying and loneliness in their school community. Every year MLL provides training for 5000 peer supporters and 400 peer support coordinators, conducts surveys, produces educational materials and runs the School Peace Programme. In addition, MLL runs a helpline for children and parents and is part of the Finnish Safer Internet Centre. MLL has been the coordinator of the two-year project Youth participation in bullying prevention co-funded by the Daphne Programme of the European Union.

www.mll.fi/peersupport



Friends is a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of bullying as well as online harassment and intimidation. Friends educates and supports schools and sport clubs throughout Sweden. Friends uses a long-term approach to increase the knowledge and involvement of adults and children through education, guidance and formation of public opinion. Friends' work is based on identification and analysis of each specific organization/school, preventive multi-level measures based on the analysis and a promoting work for safety, equality and democracy. Friends International Center against Bullying, established in 2013, is the organizational home for Friends' operations in other countries and a meeting point for all those working against bullying.

www.friends.se



The Kék Vonal Child Crisis Foundation, established in 1993, is a Hungarian NGO that works on implementing the rights of children as defined by the UN. The primary task of the Kék Vonal is to listen to the children and young people and help those of them who are in need. Kek Vonal provides overall, fast, toll-free and anonymous access to help for children via telephone and internet. The organisation also implements school prevention programmes and supports the peer support work in several schools in Hungary.

www.kek-vonal.hu



Folkhälsan, founded in 1921, is a Swedish-speaking NGO in the social welfare and health care sector in Finland. It carries out scientific research and provides social welfare and health care services as well as information and counselling in order to promote health and quality of life. Folkhälsan's anti-bullying work encompasses all educational levels from kindergarten to vocational schools. Folkhälsan develops and coordinates the peer support scheme in Swedish speaking regions in Finland. The peer support scheme is used in almost all Swedish speaking schools in Finland. Folkhälsan develops methods and offers trainings, seminars and material for peer supporters, their coordinators and other school staff.

www.folkhalsan.fi



MTU NU TORE is a NGO established in 2000 on the basis of peer support movement in Estonia. The organisation works on three levels: peer students' empowerment and self-management being supportive to bullied peers, cooperation between students and cooperation between students and teachers. The objective is to teach social skills and reduce bullying in Estonian schools with the focus on the most critical students group - teenagers. TORE is active in about 70 schools all over Estonia, incorporating about 700 peer support students and their instructors.

www.tore.ee

Quick overview

The material provides a preventive approach and a practical guide to integrate youth participation and digital dimension in bullying prevention. The overall aim is to empower and activate the whole school community to participate in the prevention of offline and online bullying. The material focuses on three target groups and their collaboration: the school staff, students and parents. Based on the project participants' well-established peer support work and evaluated training methods, the material supplements existing anti-bullying strategies from the perspectives of youth participation and cyberbullying.

The material does not provide the reader with a specific program with fixed set of methods. The material gives examples of different methods to illustrate the approach with concrete "how-to's". It also uses examples of using a peer support scheme at school. However, the use of the material does not require that a peer support system is in place in a school, nor is it a handbook to start one.

Since bullying is difficult to define and detect, it makes sense to focus on prevention for achieving the most long-term success. Instead of a problem-based approach, bullying can be prevented through application of positive objectives and practices. Chapter 1 introduces the guiding principles for the approach designed. By working at the level of social and emotional skills and student participation, we prevent not only bullying but also other behavioural problems and, additionally, can promote overall well-being and academic engagement in schools.

Systematic work against bullying requires an anti-bullying policy that clearly states the approach the school takes to bullying and ensures that the entire school community is aware of the school's anti-bullying work and the steps taken to address and prevent bullying. Chapter 2 lists a lot of issues to consider when building a comprehensive anti-bullying policy at school.

Meaningful and sustainable participation requires schools as organisations to modify their practices and structures according to need. The change is about developing new perspectives and new ways of working with students. Meaningful participation is a process, not simply the application of isolated participative activities or events. Chapter 3 illustrates how to build a process of change within the school community that is not problem-based but builds on positive prevention and knowledge gathered from the students of the school.

Chapter 4 focuses on the influences that teacher–student relations have in creating connectedness and a sense of belonging among students, along with teachers' role in promoting positive peer relations within the class group. The chapter provides an example of how to build a joint training session for the whole school staff, for creating common understanding of various methods and practices that teachers can apply to foster positive learning atmosphere in the school.

Peer-led activities are effective means of promoting a positive atmosphere at school. Engaging students with specific roles and status may help them to significantly influence group dynamics and promote positive bystander behaviour. The chapter 5 introduces the implementation of a peer support scheme at school.

Engaging parents and discussing bullying with guardians are often a challenge for school staff. The methods in chapter 6 give schools ideas how to facilitate positive preventive dialogue regarding bullying. In addition, the methods illustrate how to use pupil participation to boost parents' interest to take part in school life and events.

The material is targeted for school headmasters, administration and health promotion staff as well as for organizations supporting schools and building programs or educational materials in (cyber)bullying prevention.

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Introduction – setting the approach

The overall aim behind the approach taken is to build the kind of participative processes in schools in which the students' voice is heard for promotion of school welfare and through which the students are empowered to act against (cyber)bullying, support socially excluded students, and foster a positive and compassionate atmosphere in the school. The material is directed toward youth participation in bullying prevention through application of seven guiding principles:

1. Being research-based in theory and practice

In this regard, a research-based approach means having a solid ground in research literature and current studies while being open to practical knowledge and context-based adaptations. Bullying in the digital age is a constantly evolving phenomenon having various forms in different countries, contexts, age, and schools. As a moving target¹ it should be tackled with a contextualized, reflective and participative approach. This is achieved by initiating processes of change that are reflective rather than applying a similar set of firm practices regardless of context or time. Ongoing local assessment is critical for success. Student surveys and workshops inform needs assessment and support schools' efforts to evaluate the practices and interventions in real-world use.

This approach differs from the evidence based practice approach, which has been challenged². Firstly, conducting a rigorous evaluation takes a very long time and a lot of resources. But most importantly, it can be difficult to update proven program with new insights, and in time the intervention is not anymore implemented as intended. There has also been limited success in developing culturally transferable antibullying programs. Accordingly, the material provided here is not a monolithic ready-to-use programme with a set of methods proved effective via a randomised controlled trial. Rather than an out-of-the-box solution, it is designed as

a synthesis of theoretical and practical knowledge gathered through the network of its authors, and to be a collection of time-tested practices that are aimed at illustrating and inspiring the creation of a holistic framework for bullying prevention in the digital age.

2. Targeting all hurtful behavior

The majority of bullying, especially among teenagers, remains unreported and beyond adults' sight. Therefore, tackling bullying requires fight against it from its roots. While a clear definition of bullying may be critical for research, a more reflective approach is needed in practice. Bullying should be viewed in association with related phenomena, such as aggressive behaviour, peer rejection, and sexual and racist harassment. In online environments, it is not easy to ascertain whether certain behaviour is repetitive, intentional or in a situation of power imbalance, typically viewed as criteria for bullying. The idea of targeting all hurtful behaviour or degrading treatment is put in practice in the Swedish Education Act (see page 12), which is what the student focus groups also brought up several times during the project as a desired focus for adults at their school.

3. Emphasising positive, prevention-based objectives via youth participation

Since bullying is difficult to define and detect, it makes sense to focus on prevention for achieving the most long-term success. Instead of a problem-based approach, bullying can be prevented through application of positive objectives and practices. The approach is designed to engage all school staff and community members, not just a few experts trained in specific interventions. Research has shown the prevalence of bullying to be affected by the physical surroundings, teaching methods, disciplinary practices, school climate and social norms, peer

¹ Willard 2012.

² Yeager et al. 2015

relations, teacher-student relations and social and emotional skills. In sum, the overall emphasis is to enhance the learning environment to prevent bullying, not the other way around. Furthermore, by working at the level of social and emotional skills and student participation, we prevent not only bullying but also other behavioural problems and, additionally, can promote overall well-being and academic engagement in schools.

Following the core idea of the successful KiVa Program³ from Finland, prevention should focus on social norms concerning bullying. This challenges the usual way of finding the problem in the individual, and labeling a person with a fixed role of a bully or a victim. Bullying is group behaviour, and the behaviour of young people is often determined by misperceived peer norms: they falsely believe that social cruelty is cool or in other ways appreciated by their peers. But as proven by several studies⁴, adults support for students in publicising accurate pro-social norms and shifting cultural expectations (eg. with poster campaigns at school) has led to significant reductions in bullying and increased the level of reporting the incidents.

Also, positive, prevention-rooted objectives establish safer ground for engaging volunteer students in anti-bullying work. Young people are not to resolve bullying incidents, what they can do is to support friendly relations and prosocial atmosphere in groups, offer emotional support and help other students to find an adult they can talk to. In doing so, they are not in risk of being victimized themselves. In addition, the student-led activities presented here are typically based on older students teaching and supporting younger ones, and on supporting positive norms in their community. Typical adult-led practices such as explicit classroom instruction in interpersonal skills or whole school assemblies have not considered the features of adolescence – such as growing concern for autonomy or the increasing influence of the peer group⁵. Rather than replacing it, student participation complements solid policy and the school staff's

responsibility for handling bullying incidents and setting the norms related to degrading treatment in the school community.

4. Developing the students' and teachers' social competence and social relations

Being essential in life, social and emotional skills are necessary for sustaining healthy relationships. They are gaining more attention in school curricula in many countries, and are thus a useful connection for integrating bullying prevention lessons into the curriculum. Self-awareness, empathy and values are especially important in preventing cyberbullying.

Children learn social skills in a socially supportive environment, accompanied by supportive relationships with adults and their peers⁶. Hence, using well-assessed methods for teaching social and emotional skills for individuals is insufficient, if it does not go hand-in-hand with transforming the relationships and atmosphere at the school. The survey developed for the project (see Chapter 3) helps school staff to better understand social relationships in the classes and work in partnership with students to influence the peer and student-teacher relationships in school.

Meaningful student participation is actualised in the relationships between the teachers and the students in every class. It is a relational process, not just applying individual inclusive activities. This requires developing new relationships between students and adults, which are rooted in mutual trust and respect and engage in a proper dialogue between the student and the adult. When these relationships are supportive, student engagement is a well-integrated day-to-day practice rather than an after-thought or occasional element such as feedback or initial questionnaire.

³ www.kivaprogram.net

⁴ see eg. Perkins et al. 2009.

⁵ Yeager et al. 2015.

⁶ Repo & Repo 2016.

5. Integrating cyberbullying into bullying prevention via youth engagement

Cyberbullying is often seen as a technical issue in the media, with new apps or platforms creating new problems unrelated to the social drama at school. Debate among scholars has considered whether cyberbullying is more prevalent than offline bullying⁷, is one form of bullying or instead a totally new type of peer aggression⁸, is increasing over time or not⁹, and whether it can be prevented by the same means as offline school bullying¹⁰. The material here is based on the knowledge that most bullying among teenagers happens both offline and online and the responses must be intertwined, not isolated. Despite all the debate, what is evidently needed for bullying prevention in the digital age, is a greater engagement from the students and the parents. And further, we must challenge the traditional approach wherein school staff are the authority supposed to have the expertise for understanding what the problem actually is, where it takes place, and what the best way is to intervene and prevent it. Following Yeager et al.¹¹, anti-bullying practices often fail to consider the very features of adolescence. While the developmental goal is to learn autonomy in one's relations and be free from direct adult control, also anti-bullying practices should develop from explicit rules, sanctions and teacher-delivered curricula, even though they would have proven to be effective in lower classes.

The students and parents must be empowered with the values and skills required to solve problems and make decisions in digital environments, not only to know how to get help and support from the school adults. As adults' interventions so often prove to be insufficient, it is not appropriate to only teach children to turn to adults when something bad happens,

one must also provide them with the skills needed to support each other, cope with the conflicts and promote positive relationships also in their digital communities. Clearly, therefore, it is essential that schools make addressing cyberbullying a part of their whole school community approach to bullying and implement activities that ensure dialogue on digital behaviour and competence in education.

6. Promoting active bystander behavior

Bullying is a group phenomenon in which bystanders play a significant role. Young people often see the adults' responses to bullying and particularly cyberbullying as inappropriate or ineffective. Teenagers who are bullied feel that support from their peers is often more helpful than the actions taken by the school staff¹². The underlying purpose of bullying is often to exclude someone from a social group. The value of peer support lies in its ability to include a target of bullying back into the social sphere. Even if the hurtful behaviour continues, after peers give support it is by no means as harmful as it would have been if the target had been left alone¹³.

According to research, only a small proportion of bystanders will act as defenders¹⁴, even though many antibullying campaigns have been undertaken to encourage children to stand up against bullying. In chapter 5, we challenge this approach by stating that an active bystander is not obliged to confront the aggressor (in fact, it is often unwise to do so), but should have a set of several strategies for offering support to a target of bullying. Furthermore, we describe how students' ability to support each other can be actively nurtured and developed. As the results of the project show, various small acts of kindness and peer support can truly make a difference (see the

⁷ See eg. Olweus 2012, *The Enable research review 2015*.

⁸ Menesini 2012.

⁹ Hindura & Patchin 2012.

¹⁰ Olweus 2012.

¹¹ Yeager et al. 2015.

¹² Peura et al. 2009.

¹³ Davis & Nixon 2014.

¹⁴ Cowie 2014.

figure on page 42). This approach has also proven its effectiveness in meta-analysis of bullying prevention programs¹⁵.

Active bystander behaviour is particularly critical in digital environments where often no responsible adults are present. As helpful allies, young people can provide support to a peer who is at risk or is being harmed, challenge irresponsible or hurtful behaviour, and assist in seeking adults' support.

Peer support scheme is an effective – even if often the single most underdeveloped – resource for promoting positive and supportive peer relations at school. In addition, peer-led activities can be used to influence the social norms related to bullying and aggression in peer groups. It is important to understand that students may perpetuate and tolerate conflict not because of their personal character or lack of empathy but because they perceive conflict-oriented behaviour to be typical or desirable: that is, normative within their school's social network. Addressing these kinds of underlying norms among teenagers is not possible without joining forces with them and giving space and status to those who are willing to promote pro-social norms rather than pro-conflict ones. This may or may not include a system that utilises trained

peer supporters, presented in Chapter 5.

7. Building on a process of continuous development

This material is based on a view that long-term success is achieved only by empowering the members of the school community to be reflective and active in their relationships. Chapter 2 sets the scene for starting – or contributing to – a process of change, that follows an ecological, whole-school approach. An effective bullying-prevention programme must ensure a whole-school approach; working coherently on the levels of individual, group, and community – and maintaining clear links between the actions at the various levels. Individual anti-bullying lessons or occasional moments of student participation are not sufficient, if there is to be true leadership for transforming the school culture into one that encourages participation and positive social dynamics. In addition, a peer support scheme is not a short-term intervention but a platform to be used for a process of long-term cultural change, wherein the effects are amplified over the years of implementation.



¹⁵ Polanin et al. 2012.

Chapter 2: Anti-bullying Policy in the School

Systematic work against bullying requires an antibullying policy that clearly states the approach the school takes to bullying and ensures that the entire school community is aware of the school's anti-bullying work and the steps taken to address and prevent bullying.

This chapter lists a lot of issues to consider when building a comprehensive anti-bullying policy at school. However, it is often better to start small and update the policy along with developing the actual anti-bullying practices at school. In practice, the development of a policy often starts with defining the problems at hand and a common process for dealing with the problematic incidents. Despite of the fact that the main efforts should be in prevention, it is critical for student participation that school staff is committed to act coherently if bullying incidents are seen by or reported to them. Further, this chapter provides insight for understanding why bullying so easily remains unreported and what means can be taken to overcome that challenge.

At its best, the anti-bullying policy is created with a whole-school approach in the sense that students, teachers, the school management and parents are all involved in developing and reviewing the policy. This will ensure that the same policy is being enforced throughout the school community. The anti-bullying policy should be a modifiable document as bullying cultures can emerge over time and conflicts come and go depending on relationships and influences. Thus, the school should update its knowledge about current issues in the community by reviewing the situation and policy in partnership with students and school staff on an annual basis.

Criteria for a good anti-bullying policy:

- defines all types of bullying (e.g. homophobic, gender-based, sexual, racist, or that based on the victim's religion or disabilities),
- uses alternative words for the bully and the victim. Labelling students as "bullies" or "victims" implies fixed roles rather than current behaviour. Labelling behaviour (e.g. a child who is bullying) rather than the child will promote change.
- outlines strategies the school uses to prevent bullying, including peer-led activities and the prevention of cyberbullying,
- outlines procedures to be followed, including whom to report to if bullying occurs, how to keep a record of bullying cases, measures taken to monitor and stop further bullying, and details of any sanctions,
- includes special emphasis on procedures in cases of bullying occurring online and after school,
- describes the strategies the school employs to help targets of bullying as well as those who bully others,
- outlines intervention techniques such as curriculum support, training policies and delivery, and reminders of the bullying policy, e.g. during morning assemblies,
- describes how the policy is promoted and how it is made accessible to the staff, students and parents/guardians. It also describes how to involve students in promoting the policy in a student-friendly manner.

A one-size-fits-all template for anti-bullying is not recommended; rather, for each school, students, parents and staff should be asked about what they believe will work in their particular context. Listed below are some guiding principles as a starting point for development of a good anti-bullying policy:¹⁶

1. Involve all members of the school community in writing or refreshing the policy. If it is not owned and understood by everyone it will not have an impact. This includes students of all ages, disabled students and those with special educational needs.
2. Collect background information for updating the policy (for example, via questionnaires and interviews). Give opportunities to provide input confidentially so that each respondent can be honest about what is good about current school practices – and what needs to change.
3. Agree as a school community on what is meant by bullying and what other concepts will be used (e.g. hurtful behaviour) and how they are defined.
4. Make sure that the anti-bullying policy is explicit about the school's approach to cyberbullying – whether inside or outside of school.
5. Talk about how bullying can be fuelled by prejudice and how you will work to create a culture in which prejudice and hatred are not accepted. Be clear as to what you mean when referring to prejudice. Reference behaviour that is homophobic, transphobic, racist, targeted at faith, sexist, and disablist. Explain how this type of behaviour might manifest itself.
6. Set clear boundaries and make sure these are understood by all students. Bullying thrives in cultures where name-calling, unwanted touch, rumour-mongering and disrespect go unchallenged. Think carefully about physical contact between members of your community and what is and is not acceptable.
7. Introduce routes for reporting bullying. Be clear on timescales for responding to incidents, who will be involved, and what the different outcomes might be.
8. Analyse the bullying situation or hurtful behaviour from different perspectives and find out what may have caused the incident. Remember to not just focus on individuals, but also on the location and situation, the surrounding structures or limiting norms that may have triggered the disrespectful treatment.
9. Clarify the role of peer supporters. Agree as a school community on ways in which all members can be involved in challenging bullying behaviour. What are the expectations on students, staff members and parents if they witness bullying? How can they support one another?
10. Find out where the bullying 'hot spots' are at your school, and make changes to the environment or to your strategies that target these areas.
11. Clarify how incidents of bullying are monitored. What additional support might those who have experienced bullying and those who have engaged in it need?
12. Document the work that has been done at school to intervene against and monitor a given bullying incident.
13. Consider how you can celebrate diversity in a meaningful way. What do you need to do to ensure that anyone could walk into your school community and feel welcome?

¹⁶ Adapted from "Updating / Writing Your Anti-Bullying Policy"

<http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/media/44903/Whole-school-approach-to-writing-or-refreshing-your-AB-policy.pdf>

National school legislation steers the focus of anti-bullying policies

While creating an anti-bullying policy at a given school, national legislation and guidelines must always be taken into consideration. For example, in Sweden, both the Education Act and the Discrimination Act define what must be included in the school's anti-bullying policy.

The Education Act of Sweden

According to the Swedish Education Act (2010:800¹⁷), degrading treatment is treatment that violates the dignity of a student or makes a person feel sad and hurt. The intention of the person who was mean doesn't matter. It is the effect that counts. Therefore, the person subjected to the violation is the one to decide whether the treatment was degrading or not. To be considered degrading treatment, the violation need only have happened once; it does not have to be repeated.

The Swedish Education Act talks about "degrading treatment", not "bullying". The reason behind this choice of concept was that the schools and the authority responsible for the school should be obliged to react and act before a situation develops into overt bullying.

Chapter 6 of the Swedish Education Act focuses on "measures to counter degrading treatment". The purpose of this chapter is to counter degrading treatment of children and students. The school shall ensure that goal-oriented work is pursued within the framework of each specific activity to counter degrading treatment of children and students.

The school shall ensure that measures are taken to prevent children and students from being subjected to degrading treatment. The school shall ensure that a plan that includes a summary of the measures required to prevent and impede the degrading treatment of children and students is drawn up every year.

The Discrimination Act of Sweden (2008:567)

Discrimination is deemed to occur when a school disfavours a student in a discriminatory manner on any of these grounds: gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, ethnicity, disability, transgender identity, or expression. One can be guilty of discrimination even if there were no ill intentions. The effect is what matters.

The roots of discrimination have developed from societal problems that need to be dealt with in a structured way. The Discrimination Act is aimed at preventing racism, homophobia, sexism, etc.

¹⁷The whole Swedish Education Act can be read in its entirety at here:

http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800

Setting up a team at school to develop the anti-bullying work

Based on experiences in Hungarian schools, setting up a team at school to develop the anti-bullying work can be divided into two working levels:

1. Defining, collecting and categorising the professional concepts that form the basis for everyday best practices (e.g. reviewing and updating school regulations on bullying prevention and intervention, creating a mutual consensus regarding the types of aggression occurring at schools etc.).
2. Organising those specific activities and programmes that include a focus on creating a sense of community and preventing hurtful behaviour.

After the initial meetings and discussions, the team will prepare the school Action Plan, which determines the goals to be achieved and the programmes to be put into practice.

Special attention should be paid to:

1. Setting realistic goals:

It is important for the community to determine relevant and realistic goals and for the team to be able to devote its time and energy to maintaining the processes implemented, keeping the long-term goals in mind.

- To expect all staff members to actively participate in preventing hurtful behaviour or for all forms of aggression to disappear from the school are not short-term goals – these things take time.
- In contrast, realistic goals could, for example, include starting to focus on hurtful behaviour found in the school, expecting colleagues to be more aware of these situations and be able to verbalise their concerns, and creating

a forum for discussing specific cases (e.g. through case studies). Another realistic goal could be to make children aware that they have the opportunity and the right to ask for help.

2. Team meetings:

It is important to emphasise that the team's meetings are not meant for supervision or case-study analysis. If parents and students are part of a session, it is important to avoid bringing up specific real-life cases. The meetings should not be used as a space for venting or airing grievances. The goals for the sessions ought to be kept in mind, and the focus should remain on matters that are vital to the community as a whole. At the same time, there can still be organised opportunities for cases' analysis, with only staff invited to participate (should they wish to discuss a specific problem from their own point of view) and equivalent meetings that parents and students may attend too.

3. Focusing time and resources:

Existing programmes should be incorporated into the prevention of bullying and hurtful behaviour. It is not necessary to launch numerous new programmes and activities as this might lead to ineffective allocation of the energy and attention of the staff. Rather, it is worthwhile examining the programmes that already exist in order to utilise them.

4. Reflective thinking and gaining of experiences:

One key goal is for schools to gather experiences of when and how their community operates effectively. This is instrumental to creating a safer school environment. The aim is to find best-practice formulae, methods, and tools that can function and evolve effectively. This promotes a sense of independent and competent operation and hence forges communities that bear fruit for abuse prevention and intervention.

Trust between students and school staff – a foundation for reporting bullying

The transition from primary to secondary school brings significant changes to a young person’s development and social environment. The student no longer has a homeroom teacher with whom he or she has regular contact, instead having a different teacher for each subject. As the adolescent is coming of age, the relationship to his or her peers becomes increasingly important. In this process, it is of great significance for the young person to feel included in the group where he or she is to learn how to take other people into consideration, trust them and develop empathy.

The adolescent also learns to know himself or herself better by using both peers and adults as mirrors.

Bullying is sometimes not detected by the adults of the school due to a variety of reasons. For students the threshold for talking about bullying is often high. According to surveys, more than half of children who were bullied did not report it.¹⁸ The bullied student may be ashamed of being bullied since it is important for young people to feel strong and independent in a social context. Students’ unwillingness to talk with an adult about the problem may also be caused by a lack of trust. They may, for example, assume that adults are, in any case, either unwilling or unable to intervene. The student may also fear that the bullying will get worse if it is revealed that he or she has told an adult.

AN ADULT TO TURN TO?

Is there at least one adult to turn to at school if you get mistreated by other students?

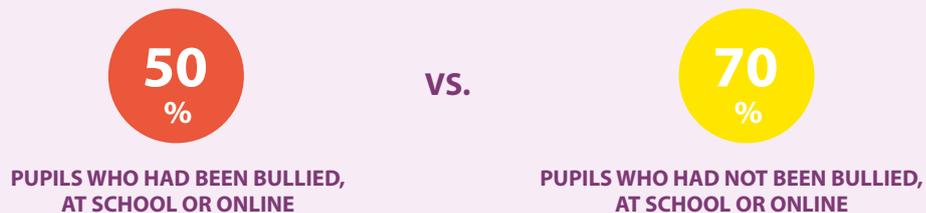
IF IT HAPPENS AT SCHOOL



IF IT HAPPENS ONLINE



At least one adult to turn to at school if getting mistreated by other students



ARE ADULTS AWARE OF IT AT ALL?

If you have been mistreated by other students, is any adult at school aware of it?



¹⁸Petrosina et al., 2010

The various forms of bullying are often divided into two main categories for purposes of discussion: direct and indirect bullying. In the former, the victim is overtly harmed, either physically or psychologically, whereas the latter involves subtler forms of bullying being employed, such as the victim's exclusion from a group. Many studies indicate that it is easier for the victim to talk about direct bullying with adults at the school than about indirect bullying, and teachers intervene more readily in cases of direct bullying.

Talking about indirect bullying can be difficult for students due to the fact that such bullying leaves no tangible evidence. Another challenge is the difficulty of accurately describing what has happened since things such as subtle but unfriendly gestures or a lack of common courtesy (such as not greeting the targeted student) are hard to objectively associate with bad intent. Often, the bullied student clearly notices that no one wants to be friends with him or her, but cannot describe in words what is causing it or making him or her feel violated.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AT SCHOOL:

- *Are staff members and students familiar with the school's plan for preventing and dealing with bullying? In what ways are students and parents informed about how the school intends to intervene in cases of bullying?*
- *How is online bullying discussed with the students? What can be done to assure students that they can turn to adults with any kind of bullying, including that taking place online?*
- *Are the teachers of the school acting in a uniform manner when noticing that someone is being bullied?*
- *If the school has a peer support scheme in place, what can be done to help peer supporters become aware of the practices that the adults at the school apply to deal with cases of bullying?*

★ BRIGHT IDEAS

- **Create an illustration of the anti-bullying policy together with the students.**

To make sure that your school's anti-bullying policy is student-friendly, students should be able to explain in their own way what the anti-bullying policy states and what it means. Draw a poster or cartoon or make an animation about the key messages of the school's anti-bullying policy.

- **Make the measures taken to resolve bullying incidents known to students.**

Handling bullying incidents must always happen with confidentiality. Therefore, what teachers and other members of the school staff do to help the bullied student is often not apparent to other students. The work done can be made familiar to students by presenting various kinds of fictional cases, discussing what is being done at school and how parents are being involved in response to such situations.

Chapter 3: The Whole-School Level: Building the Process of Participation

Meaningful and sustainable participation requires schools as organisations to modify their practices and structures according to need. The change is about the whole ethos and culture of the organisation and needs to take place within school management, among teachers and across policy and practice. Meaningful participation is a process, not simply the application of isolated participative activities or events. This requires student-adult relationships rooted in mutual trust and respect. It goes without saying that transforming the culture of a school is a long-term process, but all change must begin somewhere. This chapter illustrates how to build a process of change within the school community that is not problem-based but builds on positive prevention and knowledge gathered from the students of the school.

When wanting to involve students in the prevention of bullying, it is important to consider which particular needs the planning of the efforts is motivated by. From the perspective of bullying prevention, measuring the prevalence and forms of bullying in quantitative terms does not provide a sufficient basis for planning pre-emptive measures. If the focus is solely on finding out the prevalence of the problem, actually solving it is often considered the responsibility of only certain members of the school staff. Fostering participation requires new perspectives and new ways of working with students. Where relationships are supportive, student engagement is integral to daily practice rather than mere afterthought, occasional feedback or comments on an isolated questionnaire.

THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

1. Gathering data

Survey for students:

- Social relations at schools: teacher-student relations and peer relations
- Loneliness, mistreatment, bullying and peer rejection
- Experiences of support: support from adults and from peers

2. Analysing where we are and where we want to be

A. Workshop for students:

- Qualitative knowledge about the youth perspective
- How to interpret the results?

B. Workshops for teachers

- Shared understanding of where to focus when promoting wellbeing and participation at school
- Dialogue between school staff and students

3. Implementation: Actions at school

- **Teacher training:** Fostering positive relations in the classroom and online
- **Peer support training:** How to create a positive atmosphere for the whole school? How to foster everyone to show support through small friendly gestures?
- **Activities at school:** Theme days, break activities, lectures about active bystander behaviour held by peer supporters
- **Parents' workshop:** How parents can support friendships and social relations between students

4. Follow up – Evaluation of the actions

A. Student survey

B. Workshops for students and school staff

- Feedback about the actions
- Planning new actions

1. Gathering data

A good survey should not only include questions on overt bullying and exclusion, but also be designed to yield information on social interaction at school in general, including how students experience how the adults of the school respond to cases of bullying. Survey questions are important, since they indicate the direction in which the joint discussion and action planning will lead. The questions on social interaction and relationships aim to facilitate the development of a culture of interaction, where all students can feel belonging in an encouraging and relaxed atmosphere, and with space and opportunities for dialogue when problems do occur.

From the perspective of bullying prevention, the following matters are worth considering within the school community:

- **Peer relations and teacher-student relations.** Students' experiences of social relations at school: how they interact with teachers and each other.
- **Experiences of bullying and other forms of hurtful behaviour, happening both offline and online within the school community.**
- **Experiences of support.** How bullied students view the ways in which the adults of the school and other students have responded to the bullying.
- **Bystander behaviour.** What students do when witnessing bullying or hurtful behaviour in general, both at school and online.

An example questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

2. Analysing where we are and where we want to be

Discussion on the survey results together with the students

Involving students in planning activities in response to the survey is not enough; it is important that they are given the opportunity to discuss the results of the survey and how they should be interpreted. It is useful to discuss the results with the students even before discussing them among the adults of the school. Asking the students about their reactions and interpretations is important for determining whether the survey has been carried out properly and has been able to yield reliable information. When discussing the results, the teacher may ask the students what they thought about the survey in general, whether they considered the questions well formulated and whether certain questions had raised discussion among the students afterwards. When taking the survey results to the teachers and other staff members, the teacher may thus bring feedback from the students, adding qualitative information on how the students had felt about the questions and what they would like the adults to take into consideration when interpreting the results.

The following table outlines the course of a survey workshop for students. The workshop may be organised for peer supporters, representatives of the student council or other groups of students. The estimated duration of this kind of workshop is 90 minutes. The goal is to discuss the results of the survey and use the insights gained as a basis for a discussion on how to develop activities organised at school.

Name of the session	Objective	Implementation
Introduction, 15 minutes	Defining the goals of the workshop Structure of the workshop Methods	Warm-up game for breaking the ice and ensuring that all participants know each other's names. All participants should briefly introduce themselves. The workshop leader introduces the goals, structure and methods of the workshop. The group agrees on common principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidentiality Respect for all opinions Letting everyone talk and listening to others attentively
Discussion on the survey results, 30 minutes	Overview of the results Drawing common conclusions	The workshop leader provides an overview of the survey results. For each section of the survey, participants stop to think about and discuss the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was the purpose of this set of questions? Were the questions properly formulated? What do the results reveal? Which factors influence how the students experience and view these matters? How are the results reflected in everyday life at school?
Ideas for future measures, 30 minutes	Coming up with ideas for future measures against bullying based on insights gained from the survey	After considering the results of the survey, the participants discuss how the anti-bullying efforts of the school should be developed. The ideas may be about what the teachers and other adults of the school should do or focused on the activities of peer supporters and the student council. Participants are divided into smaller groups, each of which will discuss one thematic section of the survey in greater detail than during the general discussion mentioned above. For 10–15 minutes, students are to use the following question as a basis for coming up with ideas for future measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was done correctly to yield this good result? / What should be done better? After coming up with ideas in small groups, one of the members is chosen to stay at the table to introduce the ideas of the group while the others go to other tables to hear what the others have come up with. The groups take turns at each table to gain new perspectives. When finished, the groups return to their own tables and talk about how their ideas have developed.
Summary and conclusion, 15 minutes	Summary of students' responses to and interpretation of the survey results Summary of students' ideas for future activities Decisions on the schedule and other details of the activities	The workshop is concluded with an overview of students' comments on the survey results and the message to be brought to the teachers based on these remarks. The ideas for development that have been brought up by the smaller groups are summarised. If necessary, the amount of ideas can be reduced by voting on which 3–5 ideas from each thematic section should be implemented. The participants agree on which ideas for development are to be forwarded to the teachers, peer supporters, student council or the rest of the students.

Ethical perspectives when utilising survey results in classroom discussions

Students who participate in the survey on school satisfaction and wellbeing must be guaranteed a high level of privacy as some questions may concern issues of a highly sensitive and private nature. When revealing the results of the survey with students, it is therefore important to maintain high ethical standards from the perspectives of those who have participated in the survey on the one hand and the students working with development efforts on the other.

The following points should be considered before the workshop:

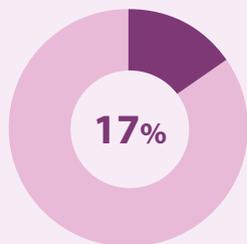
- Formulate the summary of the results in such a way that those who have responded cannot be identified. When referring to answers to open-ended questions, it is important that the identity of the author is not inadvertently revealed by showing his or her handwriting to the rest or directly quoting words that may reveal his or her characteristic way of expressing things. The important thing is not to focus on which individual student thinks what, but to appreciate the range of opinions expressed by the group as a whole.
- Think about how to introduce the survey results clearly. Avoid making interpretations of your own while introducing the facts; if you include words that reveal your own opinions and reactions (e.g. ONLY one-third... AS MANY AS half... SURPRISINGLY MANY hold the view that...), you are creating an atmosphere of pre-set expectations in which students may not dare to express different perspectives or evaluate the results independently.
- Define the goals of working with the students and think about what kind of development process it is possible for the school to embark upon. The goals of the workshop should be connected to the general goals of the development efforts of the school. The students must be honestly told what the purpose of the workshop is, what the practical significance of their participation is and what kind of things they will be able to have an influence on. This is important since students may feel powerless and even bereft of their dignity if they get the impression that they are only being pushed through a workshop session where nothing they say seems to make a difference. It must also be remembered that if adults believe that children cannot contribute to development in any meaningful way, they will not be sufficiently interested in the ideas of the students, leading to a vicious circle of self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Tell the students why you are taking notes and what you will do with them.
- Remind the students that they do not need to reveal their own answers to the survey while discussing various perspectives on a general level. The purpose of the workshop is, rather, to consider how school satisfaction and a stronger spirit of community could be attained.
- Make sure that the students know how their suggestions will be brought to the attention of those in charge of the matters at hand. Also ensure that the students are informed about how the process is moving forward once initiated.

Discussion on the survey results together with the school management and teachers

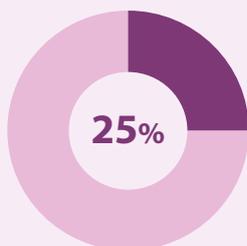
The next step is to go through the school's survey results together with the school management, welfare team and teachers. The aim with the administration meeting is to put together a strategy for future work with creating a safe school environment. In this strategy, the measures implemented are to be based on the results of the questionnaire and the notions and ideas gained from the student workshop. In order to give the participants an understanding of what challenges lie ahead, focus on presenting the views of the students and their experiences of their school. The survey and workshop for students serve as measures of dialogue between students and the school staff. The adults might have different views and experiences, but they cannot question the validity of the students' views. Distribute the student suggestions on measures and actions.

During workshops held at the project schools, students and teachers had the opportunity to consider the facts of everyday school life beyond the academic. When the school staff held workshops of their own about the survey results, they were particularly interested in knowing whether their school was doing better or worse than other schools. The students were, on the other hand, interested in discussing how the results of the survey were reflected in everyday life at school, including in the classroom, during breaks and in the hallway. The discussions were centred on finding connections between the results of the survey and what could be observed as well as on trying to think of measures that could be implemented in response to the survey:

TALKING ABOUT ATTITUDES TOWARD BULLYING



of students think that at their school students can gain respect by bullying others.



of students think that at their school students have to be careful and 'behave right' not to get bullied.

"I never imagined that almost one-fifth of the students feel that bullying others is a way to gain respect in our school. Neither did I imagine that one-fourth of us are being careful to act in a certain way so as not to be singled out as a target for bullying. What is the reason for this? What can we do to change it?"

"It would be nice if a peer support session could be spent introducing the results of the survey and encourage all students to think about their own behaviour. Do we laugh if someone gives the wrong answer in class? How are those who report bullying they have witnessed to the teacher viewed by their classmates? Will they be discriminated against in secret? I myself have never heard of anyone being blamed for telling on others."

3. Implementation: Actions at school

Building on the voice of the students heard through the survey and workshops, different kinds of action for promoting a positive and supportive learning atmosphere at school will be put in action. The actions focus on promoting positive relations between all levels of the school community: school staff, students and parents.

The actions focus on:

- **The class level** – social relations and in-class activities. See chapter 4 for more information about classroom activities and how to hold a joint training session for all staff members in order to create common understanding of various methods and practices that teachers can apply to foster a positive learning atmosphere at school.
- **The peer level** – empowering peer-led activities and peer support in schools. Peer-led activities are effective means of promoting a positive atmosphere at school. Engaging students with specific roles and status may help them to significantly influence group dynamics and promote positive bystander behaviour. Read chapter 5 for more information about how to implement a peer support scheme at school and get familiar with a series of activity-based exercises for training and engaging students.
- **Parents and guardians** – providing students with a voice. Engaging parents and discussing bullying with guardians is often challenging for the school staff. Read chapter 6 for more information about how to facilitate positive preventive dialogue regarding bullying and how to use student participation to boost parents' interest in getting involved in school life and events.



CASE

Night University

Peer supporters and their coordinator initiated an informal learning action which they called the Night University. It was inspired by series of radio lectures by the same name. The action was carried out in cooperation with student council.

All students were invited to come and stay at school overnight and participate in lectures, delivered by students themselves. The structure was to have 4–5 lectures of 30–45 minutes each starting at 23.00.

The idea was to offer all students a possibility to propose themes of interest, choose among them and volunteer for delivering the lecture. It was also possible for the volunteers to propose themes of their own and let the organising board choose among them. There was also a call to invite a celebrity or a specialist from outside the school as a guest lecturer.

The environment was made as cosy as possible. The lectures were delivered in a hall where the students could sit down on mattresses and pillows. Drinks and snacks were also delivered.

Adavere School, Estonia

4. Follow up – Evaluation of the actions

The last part of the participation process is the follow-up and evaluation phase. The aim is to look back at what has been done and to obtain information about the strengths and areas for improvement of the development work done at school. Evaluation should be made an integral part of the process already at the planning stage. The key stages of the evaluation include:

- Evaluation of specific activities: assessing impressions, opinions and attitudes towards an activity organised at school to promote positive relations and a better learning environment.
- Evaluation of the impact of activities and different measures conducted during the academic year.

The evaluation includes a survey for students and workshops for students and school staff. Together, adults and students examine what they have learned through creating, implementing, and supporting positive norms and meaningful student participation, including benefits and challenges. Reflections are then used to inform the first step, which is the gathering of data, and the process will go on. The connection of all the steps in the process is what makes partnerships between students and adults meaningful, effective, and sustainable.

★ BRIGHT IDEA!

- Organise a whole-school panel discussion on bullying. The panel should include representatives for the school management, teachers, student council, peer supporters etc. Questions for the panellists can be written during classes so that everyone can participate in planning the content of the discussion. At the end of the panel discussion, the entire school can vote on some issues concerning, for example, the anti-bullying policy at school. The vote can be organised by using some mobile app planned for quizzes and questionnaires (e.g. Kahoot).

A culture that invites everyone to join

Our school has a long tradition of having a peer support system. The responsibilities of the peer supporters include welcoming new seventh graders at the beginning of the academic year, helping new students get to know each other and organising activities that bring students together. Each autumn, the peer supporters organise a welcome party and a few days of activities. In addition, all classes of the seventh grade have named peer supporters of their own who organise various kinds of games and information sessions for the class.

Every year, the amount of students willing to become peer supporters exceeds the number that can be accepted. The programme contributes to the development of the peer supporters, giving them valuable experience of helping others and leading groups while increasing their feeling of being part of the school community.

In recent years, we have wanted to put increasing emphasis on the goal that every student should feel capable of influencing the school environment and develop a strong feeling of being an important part of the community. In addition to peer supporters, there are other active groups of students that work toward these goals – sports leaders, class representatives and the student council. Sports leaders organise sports activities during the breaks, class representatives organise activities for strengthening the team spirit and help their classes get their voices heard in the organisation, and the students' union makes sure that the opinions of students are considered both within the school and on the municipal level. Each student may only be part of one of these groups since we want to give as many students as possible an opportunity to participate.

The goal of all efforts to increase the feeling of community and participation is to create a culture of “inviting everyone to join”, as we have called it during the development process. This means that all activities should be inclusive in the sense that many different kinds of students can join. Peer supporters and the other groups described above not only offer activities as such, but also actively invite students to participate; this increases the amount of interaction between various kinds of students and contributes to the team spirit within the school. The sense of community grows when students consider themselves part of the group. Such a feeling is best upheld by constantly doing things together.

The peer support system of our school forms the foundation of all efforts to strengthen our spirit of community. Having practices that work well, sufficient coordination and organised education for peer supporters and the other groups enables us to create a new school culture for everyone. The peer supporters are active, enthusiastic and used to organising activities. During the education sessions for all groups, the peer supporters therefore play an important role in spreading their enthusiasm to other students and keeping up the spirit. Joint meetings for the different groups are important since students need to realise that their school is full of others who want to contribute actively to school satisfaction. Doing things together creates a pleasant school for everyone, a place where everyone can feel valuable and welcome to join.

*Outi Kovanen, peer support coordinator,
Sydän-Laukaa school, Finland*

Chapter 4: Class Level – Social Relations and in-Class Activities

This chapter focuses on the influences that teacher–student relations have in creating connectedness and a sense of belonging among students, along with teachers’ role in promoting positive peer relations within the class group.

The chapter provides an example of how to build a joint training session for all of the school’s staff, for creating common understanding of various methods and practices that teachers can apply to foster positive learning atmosphere in the school. Also, it introduces a wide range of classroom activities.

Classrooms are among the contexts with the greatest influence on adolescents’ social development. As a young person comes of age, the relationship with peers becomes increasingly important. In this process, it is of great significance for the student to feel included in the class group, a key context of learning how to take other people into consideration, trust them, and develop empathy. Also, adolescents learn to know themselves better by using both peers and adults as mirrors.

From the point of view of children and adolescents, the time spent at school covers many aspects of life. Consequently, the school cannot be considered merely as an institution for learning – it is an environment for fulfilling many other needs too, with the formal curriculum constituting only part of what students expect from their time at school. School is an arena in which children and adolescents can be active in various ways that cannot be understood merely by observing the lessons. Satisfaction with the broader experience of school is of great importance since it is strongly correlated with academic success and the later pursuit of higher education.

Research suggests that teachers can affect the relationships among their students in several ways. Positive relations between young people and adults at school, which encourage students’ participation

and engagement and also provide them with social support, serve as a buffer against peer-group problems. Experiencing positive and supportive teacher–student relations also increases students’ willingness to report bullying. In contrast, a lack of collaboration and consensus among teachers is associated with more bullying-related problems. The level of risk of bullying and victimisation correlates with various characteristics of the organisational culture fostered by adults in the school.¹⁹

Lack of connectedness to peers and to the school increases the risk of both cognitive and social problems at school. Promoting co-operation rather than competition, encouraging students to reach out to peers who need help, emphasising a democratic decision-making process, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation foster feelings of connectedness, as does modelling of respect by teachers and others in the school environment. Students need to feel valued, just as adults do.

Norms in classrooms

Classrooms have been found to vary considerably in rates of bullying. At a personal level, students often disapprove of bullying; however, classroom norms associated with bullying-related behaviours trump these in predicting involvement in bullying; that is, private attitudes matter less²⁰. Group norms can pertain to what is commonly done or to what is jointly approved of. Issues of bullying, in both school and online environments, have been found to be more commonplace where the students in the class group have a less anti-bullying attitude²¹ and where students expect positive social outcomes of pro-bullying actions and negative results for pro-victim actions²². Classroom norms can be evident and reinforced in the responses of bystanders who witness bullying. For instance, in some class groups, it is

¹⁹ Saarento et al., 2015b.

²⁰ Saarento et al., 2015a.

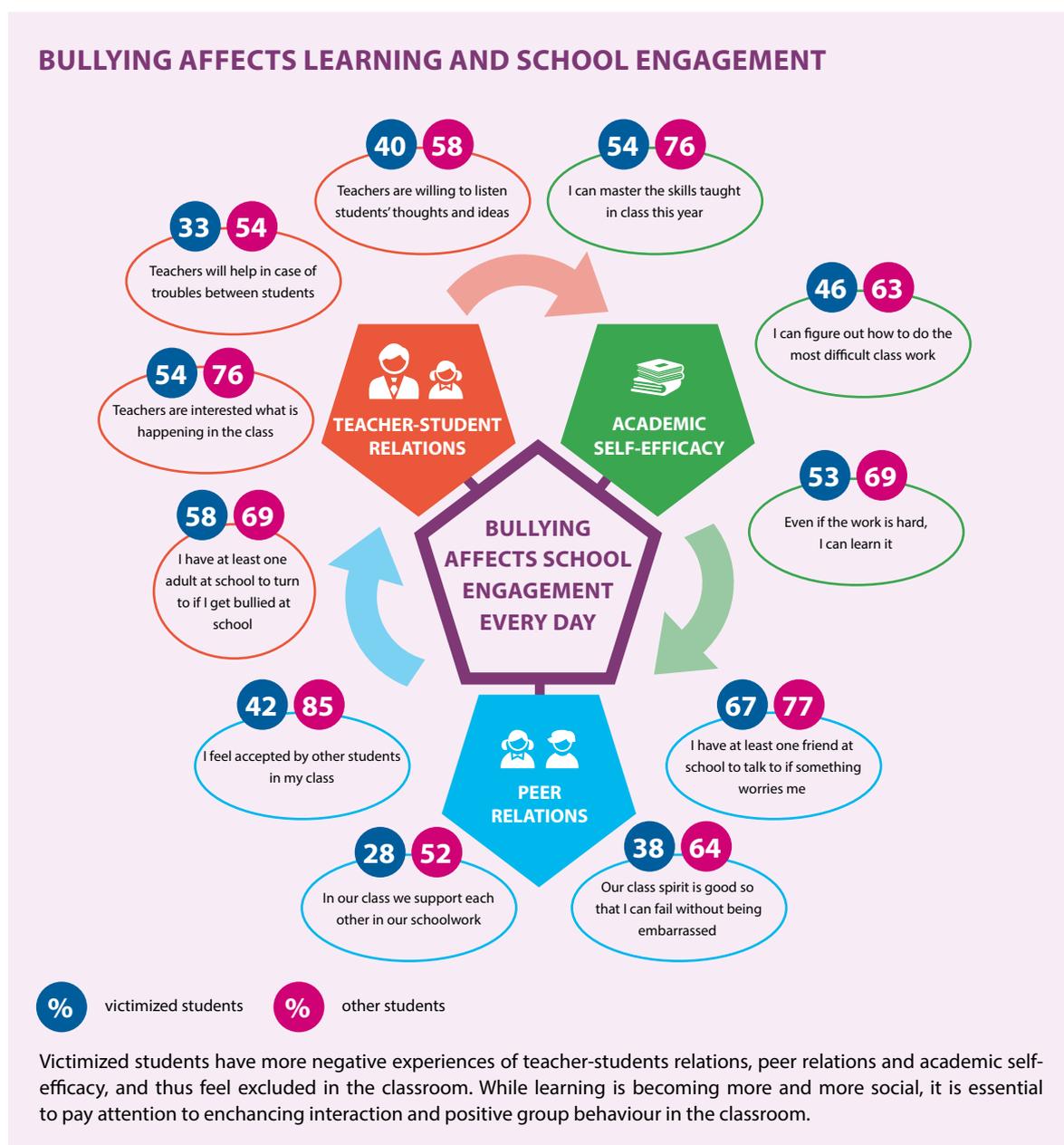
²¹ *ibid.*; Saarento et al., 2013; Elledge et al., 2013

²² Saarento et al., 2011, 2013; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004

common to behave in ways that give the perpetrators social rewards, such as laughing when the target is publicly ridiculed, while such pro-bullying behaviours are rare in other groups, wherein students are more likely to defend the victims instead²³.

Not only peer bystanders' reactions to bullying but also those of teachers are influential. Teachers' beliefs about bullying and its causes affect whether and how they intervene in bullying incidents²⁴. Through their

actions, including lack of efforts to intervene, teachers can affect classroom norms related to bullying-linked behaviours and the prevalence of those behaviours. Perceived teacher attitudes to bullying matter greatly: students who see their teacher as clearly disapproving of bullying are less likely to engage in the associated behaviours, whereas the risk of being bullied is greater in classroom and school environments where teachers are perceived as condoning bullying.



²³ Kärnä et al., 2010

²⁴ Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008

Teacher training for promotion of a positive learning environment

Research has suggested that there are various strategies suitable for teachers' use in fostering a positive classroom environment. Among these strategies are the following:

- Increasing the sense of belonging
- Modelling respect
- Mastering positive classroom-management methods
- Celebrating diversity

The teacher-training model introduced here focuses on joint discussion and sharing of good practices among the school's staff, to create a common understanding of how every teacher can promote positive relations between students by means of many pedagogical practices.

The teacher training comprises three elements:

1. Participation is possible when one is part of the group and the community – ways to foster a sense of connectedness among students are given attention
2. Social and emotional skills can be honed through practice
3. How the leader of a group can affect the group atmosphere and norms

The structure of the teacher training is presented in the table below. The training can be conducted as a full-day training session or instead divided into three parts (for example, separate workshops held during three successive school staff meetings).

Name of the session	Objective	Implementation
1. Participation is possible when one is part of the group and the community – ways to foster a sense of connectedness among students are given attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers discuss how a safe group is formed and how classmates can receive the best possible basis for getting to know each other. • Various activity-based exercises for peer interaction are introduced so as to help teachers find methods particularly well suited for their classes. 	<p>All teachers have experience of starting a new group. The session is based on discussion between participating teachers and the exchange of ideas.</p> <p>Session outline:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion about supporting group interaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion in small groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is it so important to facilitate interaction between students? How do you know whether there is a good atmosphere in the class? 2. Introduction of various methods for forming and strengthening groups. Participants should identify suitable methods for their particular needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this part of the session, teachers engage in team-building activities and reflect on the use of various exercises. • After trying several different exercises, participants discuss the following questions in small groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do I usually help students get to know each other when a new group has been formed? Which exercises suit my way of leading the group? What challenges are associated with this kind of exercises? 3. Discussion about the structures at school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there enough time in our school to get to know the students? What kind of new structures should be created to ensure that every teacher has enough time for fostering a good atmosphere?

Name of the session	Objective	Implementation
<p>2. Social and emotional skills can be honed through practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers discuss various ways of strengthening social and emotional skills as part of regular classroom instruction. Teachers try various activity-based exercises for strengthening social and emotional skills so as to find tools for their particular classes. 	<p>The development of social and emotional skills can be supported by many pedagogical means.</p> <p>Session outline:</p> <p>1. Discussion on supporting the development of social and emotional skills: What kind of social and emotional skills in particular should be actively fostered in school? How should teachers work with parents in this respect?</p> <p>2. How can social and emotional skills be practised as part of regular classroom instruction? The session instructor introduces a number of activity-based exercises (page 29, Classroom activities for teachers). Participants form small groups, each of which is to consider the following questions: What kind of experiences do participants have of this kind of exercises in a classroom setting? How could I modify the exercises to suit my class and my way of teaching? What kind of methods and exercises that have worked well would I like to share with the others? What kind of new tools would I need?</p>
<p>3. How the leader of a group can affect the group atmosphere and norms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers discuss factors that influence the functioning of the group and the significance of group norms. How can the teacher identify hidden norms and contribute to a sound working culture within the class? The session will also introduce activity-based exercises that help the class begin a discussion on their way of functioning together. 	<p>Group processes are about what is happening within a group. The functioning of the group is initiated and upheld by interaction. Interaction leads to the formation of various structures and relationships that influence the effectiveness of the group. Such structures strongly influence the learning culture of the class and whether there is peace for studying in the classroom. These structures include roles that emerge among the students, the use of power and the formation of group norms. During this session, participants will focus on ways in which teachers could influence how the class functions and consider particular problems that might emerge.</p> <p>Session outline: Participants are divided into small groups. Each group first thinks of a typical group-related problem that it would like to receive advice on. The problems are formulated briefly in writing (e.g. "The students have formed strong cliques and refuse to collaborate in random teams formed by the teacher."). These sentences are then redistributed among the groups so that each group gets another group's problem to analyse. Participants consider different ways to handle the problems and make suggestions for fostering a stronger sense of community in the classroom. When finished, the groups take turns introducing their analyses to each other. The session is concluded with a discussion on how to support the group and how to identify norms and roles that emerge among students.</p> <p>Questions for discussion: What is the problem about? What can the teacher do? What kind of methods could be tried? How can other adults of the school support the teacher in this kind of situation?</p>

TIP:

- The Hot Line exercise is well suited to teacher training also. The instructions for this exercise can be found on page 34.

Statements for the teachers to consider in the training:

- It's important that I, as a teacher, be updated on what the students do online.
(Why / why not?)
- It will make a difference to the spirit of my class group if I talk about online behaviour in the classroom.
(Why / why not?)
- I will try harder to resolve a conflict that started

online during school hours than one that started online in students' leisure time.

(Why / why not? What is the difference?)

- In our school, all students can be themselves and feel secure in that.
(Can you act/think/feel the way you wish to in relation to looks, economic background, opinions, status within the group, and discriminatory acts? How do you tell whether you can or can't?)
- I can make a difference to the students, making it easier for them to be themselves at school.
(Why / why not? How? What makes a difference?)

Questions for the teachers to reflect on:

- How should I evaluate how well the students work together?
- What kinds of situations provide opportunities for students to give each other positive feedback?

There are many ways in which a teacher can enhance the atmosphere in the class when discussing topics tied to the students' well-being, topics related to bullying (including cyber-bullying), peer relationships, love, tolerance, etc. Many lesson plans are available online, but it may be useful to create a collection of lesson plans that can be used by all teachers at the school, allowing discussion of the same topics with all students in the school.

Checklist – preparation of lesson plans for teachers

- Choosing the colleagues who will take part in the development of lesson plans. This includes informing the staff about the plan and also choosing the main co-ordinator: there must be a designated person who keeps all activities under control, organises discussions and forums, motivates the participating staff, observes and facilitates the work flow, keeps tasks to the agreed timetable, and in the end collates and arranges all the materials.
- Determining the target group (years/classes) for the lesson plans.
- Choosing the main topics (bullying, cyberbullying, peer relationships, love, tolerance, etc.).
- Collecting the relevant data and exploring one's own best practices, those of colleagues, and the professional literature (including online material). It is worth giving a lot of thought to what system to use for storing the materials compiled. The data and information collected now can be made part of the school's data bank, accessible to all staff at the school.

- Completing common evaluation of the mutually aligned lesson plans
- Organising testing: trial runs for the lesson plans
- Noting the results, providing feedback after trial use, and evaluating the experiences via group discussion
- Preparing a thematic blurb and recommendation to accompany the plan, as guidance for the teaching staff
- Using well-tested lesson plans in wider circles (i.e., for more classes)
- Organising the development of further lesson plans, if requested
- Developing a template lesson plan. It is very useful to develop the lesson plans in line with a set structure – a shared structure makes them easier to use.

A template for lesson plans

It is very useful to develop the lesson plans in line with a set structure – a shared structure makes them easier to use. The template might be based on the following elements:

- specification of the aim for the exercise
- a brief description of the exercise
- instructions informing the teacher how to conduct the exercise
- follow-up discussion: recommendation of topics for starting discussion of certain topics
- a recommended time frame for the exercises
- a list of the necessary equipment/materials
- how the space should be organised
- recommended literature to help the teacher prepare in relation to a certain topic

Classroom activities for teachers

The activities are divided into three categories:

1. Helping students get to know each other and work together
2. Emotional and listening skills
3. Bringing norms, values, and attitudes into discussion

1. Helping students get to know each other and work together

Students who knew each other already outside the classroom often want to work together and cluster into groups on that basis. However, this may make it difficult to ensure that the entire class becomes an inclusive group. To facilitate communication between students who would not otherwise seek each other's company, the teacher may introduce various kinds of group-forming activities in the classroom. For example, when students are to work in pairs or small groups, the teacher may, rather than let the students create their own groups, form random groups that help the students get to know each other better. This kind of approach ensures that everyone finds a place in a group and that no-one ends up alone. For the relationships within a group to develop, the members must, at one point or another, communicate. If the groups are formed in a randomised manner, everyone gets assigned to a pair or group on equal footing, and

nobody is forced to be isolated in the classroom. If the groups are different each time, the students get to know each other in a natural way in the course of performing day-to-day tasks together. Working with different people fosters a habit of helping others and taking their feelings into consideration, alongside a sense of responsibility for one's own learning process. The larger groups become, the smaller the percentage of members who tend to contribute actively to the work of the group. Therefore, the leaders play a more prominent role when the groups have more members. Exercises that strengthen the students' ability to work together and see themselves as a group will create, maintain, and develop a sense of community.

REMEMBER:

- School is not only about learning; it's also about social interaction. Being with friends is a significant part of what makes learning fun!
- Bullying thwarts the development of the victim's social network. Not being able to enjoy school can have dire long-term consequences, including harm to one's ability and willingness to pursue higher education. All students have the right to a safe and enjoyable learning environment.



Switch Seats If You...

- ▶ **Objective:** For students to get to know the other members of the group as they tell each other something about themselves
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Space:** A classroom with enough space for a circle of chairs

Instructions:

Form a circle of chairs, with one fewer chair than there are participants. One student stands in the centre of the circle and announces his or her name along with something about him- or herself. For example, the student may say that he or she plays a certain musical instrument, likes a certain kind of food, or is in a certain year at school. All those who could say the same thing about themselves then switch seats. Swapping seats with a neighbour isn't allowed – one must find an available seat further away. The one in the middle should try to grab a seat when others get up, and the one who is left standing is the next one to tell the others something about him- or herself. The game goes on as long as the students seem to enjoy it or until everyone has had the chance to switch seats at least a few times.

This exercise can also be used to create a random seating order in the classroom.

Questions for the discussion

- What conclusions can you draw from this activity? / What did you learn from it?

Interview exercise: Our School and Me

- ▶ **Objective:** For participants to get to know the other students better and to work in pairs to determine what makes a school an enjoyable environment
- **Duration:** 15 minutes
- **Space:** A space suitable for working in pairs and for discussion with the entire group
- ⚡ **Materials needed:** Lego bricks or pieces of paper of different colours for forming pairs, one copy of the assignment questions for each pair (Appendix 2)

Instructions:

Divide the students into random pairs by using, for example, Lego bricks: those who get bricks of the same colour form a pair. Each pair is given a set of interview questions about the things that make the school good and those that should be changed to increase school satisfaction. The students take turns interviewing each other.

After the interviews, each student introduces his or her pair to the rest of the group. The presentation should include a few things that were revealed during the exercise. When all the pairs are done, the class members discuss what kinds of ideas pertaining to greater satisfaction with school emerged during the interviews.

Questions for the discussion

- What were the most striking similarities in the various answers and opinions?
- Which questions uncovered the greatest differences in opinions and experiences?
- What did it feel like to tell another person about what you consider to be important?

Gazes Meet

- ▶ **Objective:** For the students to practise their non-verbal communication and focusing on another person
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Space:** A room with enough space for standing in a circle

Instructions:

The students stand in a circle. Ask them to look at the person on their left for a while and then move on to the next person, and so on. One's gaze has to stay on each person for a short while. If two students notice that they are looking each other in the eye, they nod at each other and swap places before starting to look at the person now on their left. Speaking is not allowed during this exercise.

Ball relay race in a circle

- ▶ **Objective:** To strengthen students' team spirit and for students to practise working together

● **Duration:** 10 minutes

■ **Space:** A classroom with space for a large circle of students

Instructions:

The students stand in a circle. Every other person in the circle forms one team, the rest another team. The first team gets a blue ball, the second a red one. Instead of balls, one may use other items, such as toy cars, serviettes, pillows, or – for those who enjoy a challenge – cups of water. The balls start on opposite sides and are to be transferred clockwise around the circle. Since every other student forms a team, the first one passes the ball to the third, the third one to the fifth, and so on. The team who manage to get their ball past the other team's ball win. The team members not currently handling the ball are to cheer for those who do. Before beginning, it is good to discuss what happens should one of the teams drop the ball.

2. Emotional and listening skills

Our feelings aren't always visible to other people. Expressing our feelings is not always easy, but we can practise, learning emotional skills in situations that cause us to experience various feelings. Tuning these skills improves our ability to communicate our feelings and helps us cope better with difficult situations. We can always improve our social-emotional skills by encountering other people and listening to them.

We can't talk about our feelings unless we have recognised them and are able to name them, which often happens only after the actual occasion, when we are better able to analyse the difficult or painful feelings. Describing our feelings can enable us to see whether we have understood them correctly. Of course, we can also examine them quietly in our minds without actually sharing our feelings with anyone.

The focus of the exercises introduced here is on getting practice in recognising and expressing emotions, using our listening skills, and identifying non-verbal messages.

Deep into Feelings

► **Objective:** For the students to understand the nature of various feelings and to identify and name their own feelings

● **Duration:** 20 minutes

■ **Space:** A space that allows group discussion, with the students sitting in a circle

⋮ **Materials needed:** A flipchart or blackboard, four pencils or pieces of chalk (in different colours)

Instructions:

Ask the students to recall as many of their feelings as possible from the day before, from morning until night. Write the responses on the flipchart or blackboard. When all the feelings have been named, the students can see a wide range of emotions, from one end of a broad spectrum to the other.

Explain to the students that:

- Everyone has feelings
- All feelings are legitimate
- Feelings can be very different from each other

Return to the responses, and ask the students to indicate which emotions they felt physically. Then draw a coloured circle around every such feeling. Secondly, ask which emotions were visible to others, and draw circles around them in a different colour. Next, ask which emotions were accompanied by an urge to take action, and draw a circle around those emotions in a third colour. Fourthly, ask which emotions went unnoticed by others, and use a different colour for those. Tell the students that a person may experience a feeling that goes unnoticed by others while someone else when having the same feeling can start behaving in a way that makes that feeling clear to everyone. Therefore, a single feeling can have as many as four circles around it.

Explain that most emotions are like icebergs in that they lie mostly beneath the surface. We often see only the peak of each other's anger, while remaining unaware of the true proportions of our emotions. It isn't only a matter of scale: anger is made up of several distinct feelings. Understanding that our anger consists of several other feelings provides us with an opportunity to handle it better and contributes to our understanding of what these other feelings might be: envy, frustration, disappointment? The iceberg will be easier to melt if we can tackle the individual feelings one by one. No feeling is 'right' or 'wrong' – there are simply feelings, and they exist only as long as we feel them.

Colours of Emotions

► **Objective:** For the students to recognise various emotions

● **Duration:** 20–40 minutes

■ **Space:** Any area that provides for easy drawing

∴ **Materials needed:** Paper, preferably A5 or even smaller (playing-card-sized), coloured pencils or fibre-tip pens

Instructions:

Ask the students to recall as many feelings as possible, give names to these feelings, and draw them in different colours as bubbles/circles on separate sheets/cards. If the range of colours is limited, ask the students to add patterns or drawings to depict the feelings. Then start a conversation on bullying or ask the students to describe a bullying situation, experienced either as a person being bullied / a victim or as a witness. Every now and then, stop the speaking and ask the students to indicate what they feel, by holding up the corresponding sheet/card or raising it high in the air. You can also ask what the people in the incident described might have felt (including the storyteller). If somebody doesn't seem able to identify a feeling from the existing sheets/cards, ask him or her to name and draw an additional feeling that suits the situation.

Use these questions for reflection:

- How many feelings could you name?
- What additional feelings did other students identify?
- How difficult was it to find and name the feeling?
- Where did you sense the feeling in your body?
- What happened after you named it?
- How many feelings did you identify during the discussion?
- What conclusions can you draw from this activity? What did you learn from it?

Exercise on emotions and situations

► **Objective:** For the students to grasp that there are different feelings attached to different places

● **Duration:** 20 minutes

■ **Space:** A space that allows independent work and group discussion

∴ **Materials needed:** Pencils (or felt-tip pens / coloured pencils) and paper / pieces of chalk and a blackboard

Instructions:

In the fourth exercise, the students are asked to write down places and the feelings they associate with those places. They can also think about the reasons they attach particular feelings to particular places. Instead of words, the students can use pictures and symbols. Read out the places listed below, one at a time, and give them about two minutes for working through each place.

What feelings do you have about...

- Your home?
- Your room?
- Your school?
- Your grandparents' house (or the house of your godparents or other adults you are close to)?
- An Internet communities you belong to?
- A summer home, caravan site, camping centre, or other place where you spend time during summer breaks?
- Your local youth club?

Ask the students to complement the list with other places that may be important to them. Finally, ask them to think about a place they could consider their refuge – a place where they can be at peace with their feelings and themselves, where they find it easiest to reflect on their feelings.

Summarise the main points that were made during the exercise.

How Am I Feeling?

► **Objective:** For the students to express and recognise emotions

● **Duration:** 10–20 minutes

■ **Space:** A classroom

Instructions:

Ask the students, one by one, to come to the front of

the group and express an emotion in pantomime. The other students have to guess what feelings are being presented.

Questions to reflect on after the miming

- How easy was it to express different feelings?
- How could you recognise the feelings being expressed?
- What do you usually do when somebody expresses some of the feelings you recognised today (keep this concrete – refer to specific cases/ mimes)?
- How difficult is it sometimes to be a bystander if somebody expresses negative feelings?
- What conclusions can you draw from this exercise? What did you learn from the exercise?

Hello, Are You Listening?

- ▶ **Objective:** For the students to practise listening and understand the importance of listening and what it is like to be heard
- **Duration:** 20 minutes
- **Space:** A room where the students sit in pairs

Instructions:

The students work in pairs. Ask them to think back to an event from the past few weeks that involved a feeling, either 'positive' or 'negative'.

Next, ask one partner to tell his or her story of such an event, and ask his or her partner not to listen. After a while, the two are to swap roles and repeat the exercise. Recap by discussing what it feels like not being listened to, and ask whether this is something that happens in real life.

In the second part of the exercise, both partners tell the same story they did before. This time, the one not telling the story is to interrupt and start talking about something else. Again, the two switch roles after a while. Recap by discussing how it felt to be ignored and whether this too could occur in the real world.

In the third portion of the exercise, the two partners listen to each other's story. Conclude by discussing how it felt to be listened to. When all the students have had a chance to express themselves, ask them how they could tell that their partner was truly listening.

3. Bringing norms, values, and attitudes into discussion

The teacher, as the leader of the group, has a huge impact on the atmosphere and norms that characterise that group. The exercises introduced in this section of the chapter provide inspiration in how to talk with students about the atmosphere, norms, and behavioural expectations within a group.

Exercise on what characterises a well-functioning group

- ▶ **Objective:** For the students to determine jointly what a well-functioning group is and what kinds of rules would facilitate their group's development in this direction
- **Duration:** 30 minutes
- **Space:** A classroom with a flipchart, whiteboard, or blackboard
- ∴ **Materials needed:** Copies of Appendix 3 ('What characterises a well-functioning group?')

Instructions:

Each student gets a copy of Appendix 3 and should begin by considering the questions about what he or she considers to make for a good, well-functioning group. Then, the students form pairs, compare their answers, and agree on a common definition of a well-functioning group. After this, pairs sitting next to each other join to form groups of four. These small groups agree on a common definition of a good group, based on the contributions of both pairs. When finished, each four-person group writes that definition on the board or flipchart sheet for everyone to see, and then the whole class discusses the topic. Ask the students whether there are similarities in the various definitions. Finally, ask the four-person groups to think about what kinds of rules would help the class become a well-functioning group as defined during this exercise. Write their suggestions on, for example, a flipchart sheet. If necessary, the group may vote on which rules should be included, so that only the five most important ones constitute the set of rules that everyone is expected to adhere to.

Totem Poles

- ▶ **Objective:** To inspire creativity and a spirit of teamwork (as the teams use sheets of paper to build as tall a structure as possible) and to discuss what kinds of roles can be identified within the teams
- **Duration:** 15 minutes
- **Space:** A classroom with enough level surface space available (on tables or the floor)
- ⚡ **Materials needed:** 15 sheets of A4 paper per team

Instructions:

Form random teams of 4–5 students each. Each team will use up to 15 sheets of paper to build a structure that is as tall and magnificent as possible. The sheets must not be torn, cut, glued, or taped, only folded. The structures must be built on a level (floor or table) surface, and using other objects (such as pens) to support them is not allowed. Give the teams 5–10 minutes to complete the task, then compare the structures' height and style. At the end of the exercise, it is good to encourage the students to reflect on the various roles that could be identified within the respective teams. Discuss what kinds of roles emerged. What are the advantages of different members having different roles in a team?

Questions for discussion

Questions for the individual teams may include:

- How did the team operate?
- What did you learn about how to perform the task together?
- What could you do to improve?
- What did the exercise feel like?
- How well did you work together?
- What kinds of roles did individual members of the team have?

Questions for the larger group may include:

- What did it feel like to perform this task?
- Did everyone participate?
- Was teamwork a good way to find a solution?
- What did you learn about yourselves / other members of the team / the team as a whole?
- Why did you make the specific choices you did?
- What did you learn?

- How can you apply what you have learnt to other situations in life?

Hot Line

- ▶ **Objective:** For the students to consider how they would respond/think/act in various situations that involve cyber-bullying and also to know that they can always change their mind after hearing other perspectives
- **Duration:** 20 minutes
- ⚡ **Materials needed:** Two pieces of paper, tape (e.g., Sellotape), a long rope (optional)

Instructions:

Create a space where all students can stand in one line. Tell them that there is a line between one side of the room and the other. You can create a physical line by laying a rope halfway along the floor in front of them. On the wall at one end of that line, put up a piece of paper with 'YES' written on it. At the other end, tape a paper on the wall with 'NO' written on it.

The Hot Line exercise is a value-based activity in which participants take a stand on various statements. You, as an educator, ask a question, and students express their opinion and its strength by standing somewhere along the line between 'YES' and 'NO'. The positions that students physically take match the views they hold, and they include the option of standing in the middle. There is no right or wrong position!

Choose one of the statements below that you find suitable. The follow-up questions are highly important, as they give an opportunity to discuss opinions and thoughts. Encourage the students to move to a different place if their opinion changes during the discussion. Allow different people to talk and state their opinion. Don't spend too long on one question – you can then move on to another question if the discussion is only tentative or doesn't get moving.

Statements for the students to consider

- Everyone in this room has prejudices.
(Is it possible not to have prejudices? How? What can we do to reduce prejudices? Why do we have them?)

- The media contribute to a society with more prejudices.
(How? What kinds of media? Affecting whom? What are some examples? How can we address media influence?)
- I can express whatever I want online – it's considered freedom of speech.
(What can and can't you express online? What do you need to consider before expressing something?)
- You are less serious with what you express online than offline.
(In what way? Why / why not? What is the difference? Is it 'OK' to write things you don't really mean?)
- Most of my friends think about the consequences before posting something online.
(Why / why not? What kinds of consequences do you need to consider before expressing something?)
- It's worse to mistreat and bully someone offline than online.
(Why / why not? What is the difference?)
- It's common to retaliate (seek revenge) against someone who has mistreated you online.
(How is this done? What kinds of consequences are there? How does revenge-seeking affect the people involved? How can you handle the situation if you get mistreated online?)

- It's everyone's individual responsibility not to mistreat someone online.
(Why / why not? Whose responsibility is it to create a safe environment online?)
- In our school, everyone is treated the same.
(If not, how can you detect the differences? In what kinds of situations? What are the consequences of this?)

★ BRIGHT IDEAS

- A 'reversed classroom' in which the decision-making is given to students. They create learning tasks and lead the process.
- A group diary, completed by the students.
- The 'jar of worries' – students write their worry anonymously on a piece of paper and put it in the jar. Solutions can be proposed by the individual student asked to draw a paper from the jar or by the whole group.
- Using story cubes / picture cards to tell stories. This can include creating new endings to the stories and letting students choose between endings and discuss their choices.



Chapter 5: Peer Level – How to Empower Peer-led Activities and Peer Support in Schools

Peer-led activities to promote a positive school atmosphere are an effective resource for schools. Engaging students with specific roles and status may help them to significantly influence group dynamics and promote positive bystander behaviour. This chapter introduces the implementation of a peer support scheme in the school. The chapter also includes current knowledge on bystander behaviour and lists a series of activity-based exercises for training and engaging students. Many peer-led activities and ideas written here can be implemented in schools even without a systematic peer support scheme.

Education legislation in many European countries states that students should be educated for active citizenship and that schools should provide a balance between rights and expectations on the one hand and responsibilities on the other. In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, schools are taking action to facilitate greater participation on the part of students and young people in the decisions that affect their lives.

Bullying is a group phenomenon in which passive bystanders play a significant role in enabling and nurturing harmful behaviour. The bullying escalates further regardless of whether bystanders react with indifference or condone what is happening. Only a small proportion of bystanders will act as defenders.²⁵ Studies have shown that bystanders are “trapped in a social dilemma” as they feel ashamed of being mere bystanders but are at the same time aware of their own need of security and acceptance within the peer group.²⁶ The enhancement of prosocial behaviour leads to high-quality relationships, contributes to tolerance of stigmatised groups, and creates opportunities for bystanders to actively oppose bullying when witnessing it. Peer-led activities for

promoting a positive atmosphere at school are an effective - albeit often the single most underdeveloped - resource for creating a school community where relationships are valued and mutual respect and co-operation define the ways in which people behave towards one another.

This chapter introduces activities, requirements and opportunities for peer-to-peer work at school. However, students may be involved in the prevention of bullying not only through the peer supporter programme, but in many other ways. For example, the students’ council and other agency groups may organise many kinds of community-strengthening activities at school, efforts that respond pre-emptively to bullying. Other anti-bullying measures organised by the students themselves may include events, parties and morning assemblies planned by the students. It is important that students are sufficiently aware of how hidden norms and roles that emerge within a group affect bullying and how one can, through one’s behaviour, play a role in determining what the school atmosphere will be like. The activities described here may be implemented as part of the peer supporter programme or in conjunction with other kinds of measures aimed at increasing students’ sense of participation.

Peer support systems in schools are defined as flexible frameworks within which children and young people are trained to offer emotional and social support to fellow students in distress²⁷. Beyond mutual help, the strength of the system lies in its potential to create a cooperative community based on mutual trust and respect.²⁸

Peer supporters are responsible students, representative of the student population and wanting to make a difference in their school around a particular cause or issue. Peer supporters commit to receive the necessary training and support to fulfil their role.

²⁵ Cowie, 2014

²⁶ Salmivalli, 2010; Jennifer & Cowie, 2012.

²⁷ Cowie & Jennifer, 2008

²⁸ Cowie & Smith, 2010

Students who become peer supporters gain long-term social benefits such as greater self-esteem and further development of interpersonal skills. The scheme is aimed at encouraging peer supporters as well as other students to explore their roles within the wider community. Peer supporters also help other students become aware of their responsibilities to others and encourage them to contribute to the school and the wider community. They assist in solving problems and disputes between students, instil values rooted in tolerance in the school community, and support a positive school ethos.

The aims for peer support scheme vary from school to school, reflecting each school's unique set of needs and circumstances. When one is designing and setting up a scheme, it is worth discussing the various needs and aims, so that the activities and processes related to the scheme maintain the participants' interest and motivation.

Promoting considerate behaviour in schools entails various means of advancing a friendly atmosphere of co-operation within the school. Peer supporters' task is to undertake activities that encourage collaboration and turn-taking among students and that highlight that every member of the school community should be valued and accepted for who he or she is. This contributes to students' satisfaction with their school, and it creates an environment of trust and safety, which, in turn, promotes and aids in learning.

How to implement a peer support programme at school?

Before designing and setting up the programme, the aims of the programme and commitment of all sections of the school community need to be discussed. Are there other activities in place that could be integrated into the programme or that could offer mutual support? Is there an active students' council in the school? How could peer supporters and representatives of the students' council work together and what are the boundaries of their roles?

When introducing a peer support scheme, it is important to engage the whole school in planning and deciding on the project. The aims of the scheme must have a full backing of all sections of the school community, and while the decision to initiate a scheme is taken by the head teacher, the whole

school community should be taken on board at an early stage of the process. Particularly, it is essential that everyone understands that the whole school stands to gain from the scheme, not just the providers of the service.

Appointing a coordinator is the next step in preparing for the project. Coordinators – it helps if they are two – are usually recruited from the school's teaching staff, and they need to be committed and genuinely interested in the scheme. Setting up the scheme involves a number of time consuming steps, so the recruitment and training of peer supporters is best planned a term in advance. Suitable facilities, time, and other resources also need to be secured.



QUESTIONS TO ASK WHILE SETTING UP A PEER SUPPORT SCHEME

1. *How is peer support related to the school's existing welfare services and participative structures?* Discuss how peer support fits within the framework of activities and processes already in place at the school.
2. *What are the aims behind the scheme?* Set aims for the school's peer support.
3. *How is the scheme to be embedded in the everyday workings of the school?* Decide on whether training sessions and regular meetings for peer supporters will be spread across various school days over a longer span of time, an optional course in curriculum time, or an extracurricular activity.
4. *Who will supervise and support the peer supporters?* Appoint co-ordinators.
5. *How will the co-ordinators be trained in their tasks and duties?* The co-ordinators are trained in interactive training techniques. NGOs provide coordinator training in many countries. In case of no training available, provide time to read online resources available and to seek partners for training the peer supporters.
6. *Which students will be appointed as peer supporters?* Decide on how peer supporters will be selected – most schools use formal selection, with application forms and interviews. Then select suitable students.
7. *How will peer supporters be prepared for the role?* They have to receive appropriate training. In addition to the staff co-ordinators, these students can be trained by, for example, members of the local community and youth workers who are qualified in interactive and participative training techniques.
8. *Which activities and processes will be used in the scheme?* Peer supporters and co-ordinators must draw up a plan of action.
9. *How is the scheme going to be advertised and publicised?* School staff, students, and parents/carers are informed of the launching of the scheme at this stage.
10. *During the first year, what worked well and what did not?* Peer supporters, co-ordinators, and the student management evaluate the activities and processes involved in the scheme.

The role of the peer support coordinator

Peer support requires adult coordinators. Although these individuals often are school staff, a school nurse or a school youth worker can take responsibility for running the scheme. Larger schools often have more than one coordinator, and some schools also have a dedicated steering team consisting of staff representatives and peer supporters. Although the scheme is heavily dependent on co-ordinator enthusiasm and commitment, the school must allocate adequate resources for peer support also if the scheme is to succeed. Coordinators must have enough non-contact time for administration and supervision of the peer supporters, coupled with sufficient financial resources to cover materials, peer supporters' training, etc. In the ideal case, the co-ordinators should be trained in participatory methods and dealing with group dynamics too, especially if not

already familiar with these approaches.

Coordinator's role is to facilitate peer supporters' potential and to help them come up with their own ideas, rather than control them. However, it is the adult supervisor who takes the responsibility for running the scheme and decides on its aims together with the peer supporters. The coordinator also ensures that activities and processes involved in the scheme are adequately assessed and evaluated, and keeps up the enthusiasm for the participants. Coordinator's personality plays a major part in contributing to the success of the scheme. Many coordinators have told that their work has helped them see their student through new lenses and from an entirely different perspective. In addition, involvement in a peer support scheme provides an opportunity for coordinators to develop their instruction to better meet the needs of individual students. The relationship between a coordinator and peer supporters is somewhat different to a normal teacher-student relationship. For

young people, the coordinator represents a reliable adult they can turn to for help and advice; an adult who is interested in their personal growth, gives positive feedback, and does not assess their progress numerically.

Recruitment of peer supporters

Recruiting new peer supporters is a crucial stage of the program implementation. Important criteria for a peer supporter are commitment to the aims of the scheme, an ability to empathise with other people and to accept diversity, an active personality and a positive approach to school life, coupled with realistic expectations for the scheme. Different personalities, whether introvert or extrovert, enrich the group's perspective. Ideally, the group should involve both girls and boys. Provided that the school already has some history of peer support, the group can include also at-risk students. Getting involved in a peer support scheme can help students who are running the risk of social exclusion by providing an opportunity to connect with other students and to find new interests. However, including such students requires adequate resources as well as support and commitment from the rest of the group.

How the selection is done and who is selected is crucial and will affect the general appreciation of the peer support activities. To ensure the success of the scheme, the process should be carried out carefully and with special attention to the larger school community. The selection should not be based on popularity or academic success. Best practice is to use both school

staff and student opinions in the selection. The group of peer supporters should be heterogeneous and representative of the student population.

Inherent in the values of peer support is that the process should be accessible to all students. To ensure fair and equal access the candidates can be asked to fill in an application form or to write an informal motivation letter outlining why they are applying and what they feel they can contribute to scheme. Some schools even take advantage of the current peer supporters when recruiting and interviewing the candidates. The coordinator can also consult the staff about the suitability of the applicants.

Peer supporters in action

Peer support in the school setting has mushroomed into many diverse approaches, all based on the idea of young people helping and guiding other young people. Typically one of the most important duties of a peer supporter is to be involved in the induction of new students. Peer supporters can be divided into groups of two or three, with each group attached to a new intake group to guide the new students into their new environment. A proper induction for children about to start their new school benefits the whole school community: the sooner the new students start feeling comfortable in their new environment, the sooner they will be able to wholeheartedly concentrate on their studies. Apart from new students, peer supporters can also act as guides for visitors to the school (other students, parents, other groups). In addition, they can attend open days and parent-teacher meetings to represent students' views and concerns to adults, and visit students in the lower grades of comprehensive school to tell about their school.

Peer supporters also organise themed days around issues such as bullying and tolerance, along with celebration activities for special occasions. These days and school festivities may include Christmas parties and celebration of Universal Children's Day or even celebration of Valentine's Day or Halloween. Such breaks provide opportunities for peer supporters to arrange various games and other activities that promote school spirit. They can also establish a drop-in service or be available in a specified room, so that students in need of support or company will know where to find them.

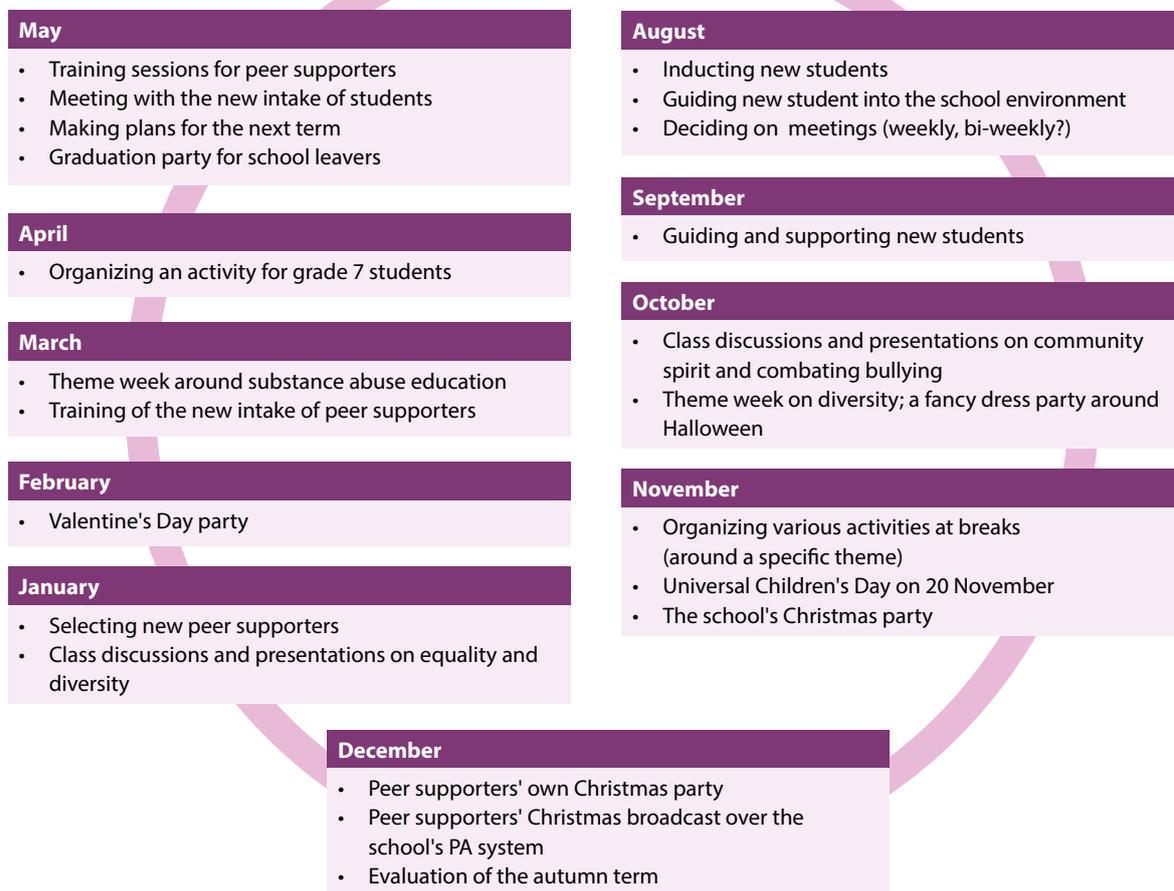
Silvia's inner growth and opening up:

"When Silvia came (or, actually, was sent) to me, she didn't want to talk about herself... or about anything. She stayed silent and stared at the wall. But she joined as a peer supporter. Now I can see the influence of her participation – when we have one-on-one sessions now, she is able to talk about herself, analyse herself, and describe her feelings, and she dares to talk to me about her personal worries and problems. She has started to trust me."

– School psychologist, Estonia

CASE

AN EXAMPLE OF AN ANNUAL PLAN FOR PEER SUPPORTERS



Key factors for making the peer support scheme a success:

- Being a peer supporter is seen as a desirable role amongst students.
- The peer support coordinator has support from the senior leadership team and other staff members.
- Peer supporters receive sufficient training for their role.
- Peer supporters participate in setting objectives for their own activities and draw up an action plan for the entire school year.
- Peer supporters convene regularly to plan their own activities.
- The school has at least two peer support coordinators, who are committed to the role for a minimum period of two years.
- Peer support coordinators meet peer supporters on a regular basis.
- The peer support scheme has been recorded in the school's curriculum, annual plan and anti-bullying policy.
- The school has specified the role of peer supporters in prevention of and intervention in bullying and informed the members of the school community of this.
- Peer support activities are visible and audible to school staff, students and parents. The school's students and staff know which students act as peer supporters.

The role of peer supporters in anti-bullying work at school

- While peer supporters may play a significant role in anti-bullying work, it is important to understand that resolving situations of bullying that have already emerged is a demanding task, one that should always be an adult's responsibility. Under no circumstances is it to be left for young people to deal with this by themselves.

The role of peer supporters in anti-bullying efforts should be focused on preventive activities and emotional support for victims rather than resolving incidents. Every school should have an anti-bullying policy that clearly states the school's approach to bullying and the steps that will be taken to address and prevent bullying. The school staff should receive training on the policy, and it should be communicated to the school community on a continuous basis. The peer support scheme should be recorded in the school curriculum, annual plan and anti-bullying policy. Furthermore, Cowie (2014)²⁹ argues that the degree to which the peer support strategy has been integrated into the school policy as a whole, or "ethos", is often a contributing factor to its success: "It would appear that peer support systems work best in schools where there is an active whole-school approach to school bullying so that the work of the peer supporters is reinforced by other interventions that target both individual bullies and victims and that implement anti-bullying policies at class and whole-school levels." Peer supporters can also play a key role in spreading information about policies and procedures pertaining to bullying.

Because peers have direct knowledge of complex networks of relationships within the peer group and since bullying-related issues often have their origins in peer groups, students are well positioned to help other students solve their problems³⁰. Peer-support-

based anti-bullying models can give young people a voice and agency – they are empowered to take action, building on their knowledge of peer groups to create emotionally healthy relationships actively. By running campaigns, schools can promote healthy relationships throughout the school and help to develop a sense of school community rooted in concern for others and empathy with their feelings. Peer supporters may play a significant role in changing and influencing group dynamics by defending and helping victims. At the same time, they can set an example for others, spreading an atmosphere within the group that can clearly reduce bullying.

Bullying may occur without the school staff noticing. In many cases, telling these adults about what is going on does not help, and it may even make the victim's situation more difficult.³¹ In contrast, talking with a peer supporter will seldom exacerbate the situation. In their responses to the evaluation survey conducted by the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare³², peer supporters reported that they had engaged in supportive discussions, encouraged bullied students and helped them find an adult to confide in.

Peer supporters can:

- provide students with someone of similar age to talk to
- support vulnerable students by talking to them and helping them feel safe
- report incidents of bullying or problems with peer relations to staff members
- understand the issues that exist among their peers in relation to bullying and behaviour
- work with students who are being bullied or have bullied someone
- help review policies and procedures pertaining to bullying and behaviour
- lead activities and campaigns that educate students, staff members and parents about bullying
- provide students with a voice

²⁹ Cowie, 2014

³⁰ Cowie & Wallace, 2000

³¹ Peura et al., 2009

³² Peura, 2012

Volunteer students as active bystanders – Small acts that strengthen the school community

Peer supporters are often able to notice if a student is being bullied or has not been able to become part of the group, and they naturally want to help. Before encouraging them to do so, however, it is important to discuss with them what kind of support works best in different situations.

Community-strengthening activities organised by the peer supporters can, if successful, bring all students closer together and thereby make even the one who has been bullied or lonely feel that he or she is truly part of the group. The most important yield of these activities in the context of bullying prevention is that students get many opportunities to get to know each other at school and are encouraged to interact with each other in positive ways. Students' confidence

in their ability to support victims of bullying is strengthened when they are provided with a safe environment for practising ways of doing so. Empathy toward victims can be strengthened in several ways, for example by discussing various cases of bullying and considering what the situations at hand would feel like from the perspectives of students that play different roles in the context. Peer supporters should be encouraged to think about how they through their efforts may contribute to the development of positive norms for interaction and an atmosphere where respect is gained by treating others well.

Studies have shown that the most effective way to help a bullied adolescent is to provide support and encouragement.³³ This kind of support may include, for example, another person coming to talk with and listen to the victim or spending time with him or her at school. Experiences of how other students acted and whether the victim considered these interventions helpful are presented in the table below:

WHAT HAVE OTHER STUDENTS DONE AFTER SEEING YOU BEING HURT?

(N=177 victimized students)

	I experienced..	...and it helped me	change during the project (who experienced it)
Talked, sat down or spent time with me.	57%	70%	+22%
Messed me to encourage me.	53%	65%	+23%
Gave me advice.	55%	58%	+26%
Helped me get out of the situation.	51%	67%	+19%
Told the person(s) to stop.	50%	56%	+27%
Helped me to tell an adult.	41%	47%	+25%
Told an adult.	41%	39%	+21%
Did something else.	12%		+11%
Did nothing.	31%		-28%

³³ Davis & Nixon 2014.

According to a survey conducted by the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, what helped bullied students the most often was the gentle social support offered by other students, that is, simple things like someone coming to sit beside the bullied students, saying hello or asking about how he or she is doing. Receiving encouraging messages was also considered helpful in this kind of situations. During workshop sessions where the results of the survey were discussed with students, peer supporters held the view that there should be more discussion at school about the various ways in which a bullied student can be helped. Not all students have the courage to intervene directly when witnessing bullying. Indeed, doing this is not always necessary or advisable as confronting the bullies can make the would-be helper a new victim and even lead to physical injury. Instead, however, after the bullying has already occurred, any student may safely support the victim with friendly gestures such as asking how the victim is doing when meeting him or her in the hallway.

The ability of students to support each other can be actively fostered and practised. Virpi Pöyhönen, who in her doctoral dissertation³⁴ discusses bystander behaviour in cases of bullying, argues that the ability to defend a bullied peer is influenced by factors intrinsic to the helper (empathy, social cognitions) and interpersonal factors (the helper's position in the group). The class environment also determines whether students stand up for their bullied classmates. According to Pöyhönen's study, a bullied peer is most likely to be defended by an empathetic student with a strong ability to sense the feeling of others and a high degree of self-confidence. In addition, this defender is often popular among his or her classmates. Confidence in one's ability to successfully defend a bullied peer also plays a great role. Nevertheless, these intrinsic factors are not the only ones influencing whether the student chooses to act when witnessing bullying; the group-level factors have great significance of their own in determining what students will actually do. According to the study, one-third of the intervention can be explained with group-level factors and two-thirds with factors intrinsic to the individual.

PEER SUPPORTERS ACTIVELY DEFEND VICTIMS



★ BRIGHT IDEAS

- Doing things together is an effective way of including everyone in the group. In order to increase participation, try to create tasks of various kinds so that all students can find something they like.
- Make sure that well-intended attempts to help a bullied or excluded student do not leave him or her stigmatised or labelled even further. Bullied students should always be approached without the explicit agenda of a 'quick fix' to their loneliness and other problems. Think about activities that could involve many students, and create ways to invite each student to take part in these.

³⁴ Pöyhönen 2013.

Lunch with peer supporters

The peer supporters of our school learned from the seventh-graders that strong cliques had been formed within this grade. The cliques became particularly apparent in the school cafeteria at lunchtime; the hidden norms of the group were so strong that only certain students were allowed to sit on certain seats at certain tables. The peer supporters also noticed some students who were always eating alone. Those who did not belong to a clique often had to look for an available seat for a long time; wherever they went, clique members said that there was no more space at that table since the seats were reserved for their friends.

The peer supporters wanted to help those who were excluded in this manner. The school counsellor, also having been informed that lunchtime was becoming increasingly problematic for some students, joined the peer supporters in thinking about a solution. We talked about how to change the situation. The peer supporters were willing to help, but they were afraid that their assistance would feel awkward from the perspective of a seventh-grader who is somewhat prone to withdraw. We arrived at the conclusion that the best way to change things was to bring all students closer together, thus fostering a common culture where nobody would be excluded. We came up with a campaign week called "Lunch with peer

supporters", during which peer supporters from the ninth grade actively took a seat at the tables of the seventh-graders, initiating casual conversations between students and asked students from other cliques to join. The goal was to create a new lunchtime culture that would allow students from different classes to sit at the same table and eliminate the fear of being rejected when trying to find a seat.

The campaign week received positive feedback from the seventh-graders. The students found it nice to have new people included in the lunchtime conversations. They also found the peer supporters, who were a few years older, pleasant to have lunch with. The peer supporters acted as an example, demonstrating that it is nicer to be at school if its culture makes it normal to be friendly toward everyone and have conversations with those who are not one's close friends. For the peer supporters, the week was an excellent opportunity to hear the thoughts of the seventh-graders, information of great value when planning activities for strengthening the school community.

*Birgitta Nurmi, peer support coordinator,
Viherlaakso school, Espoo*

Training activities and exercises for peer supporters

Several examples of training methods are provided next. This section of the chapter has been divided into three parts:

1. The role of the peer supporter and aims for the peer support scheme
2. Social and emotional skills
3. Positive bystander behaviour

Part 1. Role of the peer supporter and aims of the peer support scheme

At the beginning of the training, participants are introduced to each other and start to form a group identity. The participants reflect on the nature of peer support and their own peer support roles. They will also be given basic information on the principles of the peer student scheme.

Sunflower

- ▶ **Objective:** To identify personal strengths and areas needing support and development and to practice giving and receiving positive feedback
- **Duration:** 20 minutes
- **Space:** A classroom
- ⚡ **Materials needed:** Pencils and paper.

Instructions:

Participants are asked to draw a large sunflower with their own name in the centre of it and with some petals and leaves on the stem of the flower. The participants then fill in the petals with what they consider to be their personal strengths – a positive personal quality or a special skill – and the leaves with areas they think would need support and development. Note that the petals should outnumber the leaves. Once everyone has completed their sunflowers, the drawings are hang on the wall and everyone can add more petals and positive qualities on each other's sunflowers. If the students do not know each other well, the trainer encourages them to write something positive based on their first impressions of each other.

Questions for the discussion

- What conclusions can you draw from this activity? / What did you learn from it?

Cloud map

- ▶ **Objective:** To think about the role and tasks of peer supporters
- **Duration:** 30 minutes
- **Space:** A classroom
- ⚡ **Materials needed:** Pencils and large sheets of paper.

Instructions:

The students are divided into groups in alphabetical order (surnames). The groups are then asked to draw a balloon in the middle of a blank sheet of paper. The balloon represents peer supporters and has the text: 'A good peer supporter' attached to it. The balloon is floating across the sky surrounded by three kinds of summer clouds. Some clouds symbolize things that are important in participants' lives; others stand for things that they can draw strength from. The third set of clouds represent peer supporters' future hopes and dreams.

The cloud maps are then presented to other groups. Do the maps drawn by the other groups contain similar things and ideas? How do the personal strengths identified in the previous exercise relate to the practice of peer support? Which of the strengths will benefit peer supporters? How can involvement in a peer support scheme help them develop as an individual?

On the basis of the cloud maps and the discussion, the groups then establish the aims and objectives of a peer support scheme. What kind of activities would they like to undertake? What are the aims of the scheme in their school? What does the school need?

The apple tree of the peer support scheme

- ▶ **Objective:** To launch the planning of future activities and clarify objectives for peer supporters
- **Duration:** 35 minutes
- **Space:** A classroom
- ⋮ **Materials needed:** Pencils and paper

Instructions:

Split the participant into groups on the basis of their first names. The participants then draw an apple tree that represents the peer supporters' group and their work. What will make the tree grow? The earth from which the tree grows is made of resources and circumstances that constitute the foundation of peer supporters' services. The trunk symbolizes peer supporters themselves, while the branches, leaves and apples represent their dreams. What kind of apples will the tree bear?

After the trees are completed, the groups are asked to think what they consider to be the most important apple, or dream. The trainer writes the responses on a flip chart or a whiteboard and continues with the following questions: if the group's dream is a safe school day, for example, how could it be achieved? What makes a school day safe?

Part 2. Social and emotional skills

The focus of this section is on interaction and social skills. Developing the self-awareness of peer supporters is playing a key role while promoting their empathy skills and willingness to help. In addition, the participants will learn about the principles of teamwork, while also identifying the challenges associated with peer support.

Johari Window

- ▶ **Objective:** To increase participants' self-awareness.
- **Duration:** 20 minutes
- **Space:** A classroom
- ⋮ **Materials needed:** Paper and pencils

Instructions:

The trainer presents the Johari Window, a tool used for improving self-awareness and understanding the reasons why people behave the way they do.

Background on the Johari Window

1) The open quadrant

The open quadrant is the area we and other people know – the area we want other people to know and one that they do know. It describes our own way of thinking, acting and dealing with different issues. The larger the area, the easier we can express ourselves and the easier we communicate with each other. The area of this quadrant varies in different situations: we are more open among our friends than in the company of strangers.

2) The blind quadrant

The blind quadrant refers to those areas of our actions, emotions and attitudes that we do not or will not notice but which other people will see. Some may find our behaviour jealous or inconsiderate without us realizing it ourselves. If we are given constructive feedback, we can get to know ourselves better and gain a new perspective on how we affect other people. Constructive feedback will reduce our blind quadrant and consequently make the open quadrant bigger.

3) The hidden quadrant

The hidden quadrant contains things we do not wish to tell anyone. In general, we are afraid of showing any feelings that we consider negative, such as fear, anger, grief or anxiety. However, concealing lots of ideas, thoughts and emotions will undermine our strength and make our behaviour insincere. Everyone is allowed to secrets, but the aim should be to reduce the hidden area and increase the open area by disclosing relevant information and feelings.

4) The unknown quadrant

The unknown quadrant contains the part of ourselves that neither we nor others are aware of. There are times when we find it difficult to understand ourselves and our behaviour. Self-awareness exercises and new situations will help us learn more about ourselves and understand those areas in ourselves that we are not aware of. Positive human relationships make our open quadrant to expand and the blind and hidden quadrants to

reduce. Self-awareness and self-confidence make it easier for us to express our thoughts and feelings and to cooperate better, as we find it easier to be ourselves in different situations.

Based on the Johari Window, the participants are asked to discuss how they can help other students improve their self-awareness. What does it mean when we say that peer support promotes the students' healthy growth? What should the school community be like to allow everyone to develop? What bearing does the Johari Window have on a happy school community?

Listening and communication

- ▶ **Objective:** To enhance listening and communication skills and encourage awareness of self-esteem
- **Duration:** 15-20 minutes
- **Space:** Any space
- ∴ **Materials needed:** None

Instructions:

Firstly, ask the students to listen to several sounds. After a while, ask them to tell the others what sounds they heard. Lead discussion of what it was like to concentrate on sounds only, and ask whether the participants could move their attention from one sound to another, or back and forth.

Then, divide the group into pairs, in which one student asks the other for something and the listener has to repeat or summarise the request and then reject it, saying 'No'.

In the next round, let the students choose whether to say 'Yes' or 'No'.

In the final round, let the students agree to fulfil the request. Continue with discussion of feelings and thoughts prompted by the various reactions. different reactions.

Use these questions for reflection:

1. How did you experience the differences between the rounds?
2. How difficult was it to change your reaction/response?
3. Was there any contradiction between what you were supposed to do and what you wanted to do?
4. How did you handle these cases?

5. How do you handle similar cases in day-to-day life?
6. What conclusions can you draw from this exercise? What did you learn from it?

Such a friend

- ▶ **Objective:** to develop empathy skills
- **Duration:** 20-40 minutes
- **Space:** A classroom with enough wall space
- ∴ **Materials needed:** A prepared set of sheets/cards (from 6 to 10 sets, 5-10 sheets/cards in every set). For every set there should be one sheet/card with a name, other sheets/cards are named with different characteristics of a person, beginning with appearance (eyes, hair, clothes etc.) and ending up with character traits, values a person might follow or different behavior; hang the sheets/cards on the wall.

Instructions:

Hang the sheets/cards with the names on the wall and ask every student to pick one of them – choose a friend out of these names. Ask whom they chose. Then step by step add sheets/cards with different characteristics to the names. After every step ask the students if they want to keep the same friend or want to change.

Ask why they made the decision. Pupils can then choose another name with a different set of characteristics to be his/her friend, if they want to. Then add another set of characteristics to the names. Finally at the end of the game summarize and discuss which were the bases one makes a choice of friends on and how it can change.

Use these questions for reflection:

1. how difficult was it to decide whether to keep the old friend or choose another,
2. what were the main reasons for changing,
3. did you take some previous friends back,
4. how many friends did you have at the end of this exercise,
5. can you see a possibility of keeping them all,
6. can you recognise these choices as ones you have made in real life,
7. have you experienced being chosen as a friend and then been left behind or even actively rejected,
8. and what conclusions can you draw from this exercise / what did you learn from it?

Part 3. Positive bystander behavior

Each member of a group can, in his or her own way, influence attitudes toward bullying. Defending a bullied person is difficult since the defender has to be willing to risk his or her own position in the group by opposing its unofficial norms. Bullying may in some cases even be an artificial way of keeping up a team spirit by singling out someone as a common object of mockery. From the victim's perspective, the worst thing about being bullied is often the feeling that non-intervening bystanders are either participating in the bullying or simply being indifferent.

It is important that peer supporters are encouraged to think about different ways of defending victims of bullying and showing empathy toward them. Through their work, peer supporters may facilitate a change in the unofficial norms of behaviour that tolerate bullying.

The 4-corner-method on bystander behavior

► **Objective:** The purpose is to encourage the students to discuss what they, being a bystander in a bullying situation, can do. What effect can their behavior have on other bystanders, the victim and/or the bully?

● **Duration:** 30 minutes

■ **Space:** Any

Instructions:

Make sure that the room's furniture allows the participants to move between four "corners". Every corner represents an alternative action in a bullying situation. The situation and the alternatives are described below. You can, if you like, write the alternatives down on four different papers (one alternative on each paper) and place them in the corners.

Start by reading this short story to the participants:

"Nina and Alma have been friends since kindergarten and throughout primary school. As they begin high school, Nina soon gets to know new friends. Even if Alma sometimes joins them, she's often seen alone in

the breaks. As time goes by she's seen more and more by herself. She is often occupied with her phone or tablet and doesn't take the initiative to talk to anyone.

During winter break a film, in which Alma sits alone in school, is published online. There are also condescending comments about her. Back in school after the break, Nina and her friends either ignore Alma or, taunt her with comments and gestures. Usually this happens when the students are gathering before a class starts. At one point Alma is being pushed and someone says "Move it, fat ass!". A few of the class mates giggle. "What's that smell?" somebody says, another student answers "Alma, of course." You can see Alma's face is turning red, although she's trying to cover it, as she hurries to her desk. You're in the same class as Alma, what do you do?"

Now read the alternative actions standing in the corner that represents each alternative.

Alternative actions:

1. I would tell Nina and her friends to stop being mean to Alma.
2. I would like to speak up, but I don't know what to say. I always say 'hello' to Alma and talk to her as often as I can.
3. I don't know what I can do. I think that the teachers should put an end to the bullying and sort things out between Nina and Alma.
4. Other/own alternative.

Now ask the students to go to the corner that represents the alternative they chose.

If someone ends up standing alone in one corner, you – as the leader – could join that person. By doing this no one stands out as the only one having a certain opinion. You can also stand in an empty corner to show that this opinion is also okay.

Ask the students in the same corner to discuss why they chose that particular alternative. Those who stand in the "other/own alternative"-corner can begin by telling their alternative, and then present their alternatives to the whole group.

Important! Nobody should be forced to verbally defend their choice of alternative, but the leader should of course encourage discussion by creating an environment where everybody's opinions are important and valuable.

Afterwards you – as the leader – can ask further questions, to be discussed by the whole group.

Examples further questions:

- Why is this the corner of your choice? Have you been in a situation similar to the example and therefore know that you would act like this?
- What positive consequences do you think your choice of action can have?
- What are the risks if you choose this alternative?

Hurtful Situations at School

- ▶ **Objective:** The students make suggestions for and practise various ways of supporting and showing empathy toward a victim of bullying.
- **Duration:** 35 minutes
- **Space:** Suitable for working in small groups
- ⋮ **Materials needed:** Situation cards (appendix 4) in individual pieces, flip chart paper and marker pens

Instructions:

Divide the students randomly into three groups. Each group picks three cards: one with a location, one with people present, and one with a form of bullying. The three cards form a bullying situation to be used as a starting point for a discussion on different ways to intervene in the particular situation.

After choosing a secretary, the group discusses what this kind of situation could be like and describes it with a few sentences (e.g. a group of male ninth graders call a student names in the school cafeteria). The group can decide the roles of the people on the card. After describing the situation in general terms, the group discusses other details of relevance (e.g. what the name-calling was about and whether it had occurred earlier).

The group discusses various ways in which bystanders could intervene in this particular situation. The suggestions must be as precise as possible (e.g. telling the bully to stop, sitting beside the one being bullied). The students brainstorm and the secretary writes down thoughts and ideas. The various options are discussed, after which the students choose their favourite solution and presents it to the other groups. The presentation is done in the form of a short play, a comic or written instructions.

Use this questions for reflection

- What kind of solutions felt most effective?
- Which solution helped the victim in the best way?
- What was the most difficult part about coming up with solutions?
- Why is it sometimes hard to reveal that one is on the victim's side?



Chapter 6: Parents and Guardians – Giving Students a Voice

This chapter focuses on the influence of parents on students' peer relations and the parent's role in preventing (cyber-)bullying. Stress is placed on the importance of conversations between caregivers and students about relationships both at school and online. The chapter introduces various methods of encouraging discussion and promoting positive relations between students and parents. Engaging parents and discussing bullying with guardians are often a challenge for school staff. The methods in this chapter give schools ideas how to facilitate positive preventive dialogue regarding bullying. In addition, the methods illustrate how to use student participation to boost parents' interest to take part in school life and events.

Promoting healthy relationships is a key way to prevent bullying and create a safe and accepting school atmosphere. Healthy relationships involve respectful interactions between people, whether face-to-face or online. The goal is to help ensure that all students have healthy, safe, respectful, and caring relationships with everyone in their lives.

Adults are responsible for creating positive environments that promote children's capacity and competencies for healthy relationships. Also, adults have a responsibility to minimise contexts in which negative peer interactions can thrive. Teachers, parents, and other adults support children and can act as role models for them by showing how healthy relationships can work. Young people need help to understand that bullying is wrong, develop respect and empathy for other people, and learn how to get along with and support others. Because of the systematic nature of the phenomena involved, supportive attitudes and responses of all systems in which children live – in the home, in sports, and in neighbourhood milieus – is needed. Taking a systemic perspective highlights the need for changes in awareness and behaviour strategies not only for those children who are directly involved but also for their peers, their parents, teachers, and beyond in the wider community.

Parents' role in relation to students' peer relations

One of the ways in which parents play a critical role in the child's social development is by encouraging interactions with other young people. Parents thus provide opportunities to children to develop social cognition and relationship formation skills. Classmates constitute an important social group for a student. To be accepted by peers, a young person needs a variety of social skills, not all of which necessarily become equally strong. It is important to support the development of social and emotional skills among all students (and the peer group as a whole), for reducing the likelihood of mistreatment, loneliness, and exclusion. Parents should know not only how actively their child is participating in classes and about behaviour during teaching but also about interaction and peer relations within the class group. Typically, home-school communication is often limited to student's individual issues and academic achievement.

Parents and guardians play a key role in supporting anti-bullying attitudes among students and can encourage positive bystander behaviour among teenagers. Even if one's own child may not be at risk of being left alone, all parents should think about what kinds of attitudes they model for how to behave in such a way that nobody feels left alone or left out. School can empower parents in this regard by providing parents with opportunities to discuss the topic together but also inform them about peer relations and atmosphere in class, including online encounters. Naturally, this communication must be done in a general manner without violating student's rights for privacy.

Another important role is that of emotional supporter. Being bullied or feeling lonely is often associated with shame and emotional pain, feelings that may be difficult to talk about. A lonely or mistreated young person may have feelings of being a failure. Typically adolescents' negative online experiences are related to peer relations as well. Thus, it is important that parents understand the importance of peer acceptance among teenagers

and are supportive to ease the feelings of self-blame and shame and not the opposite. Further then, telling parents about bullying or harassment is easier, and the parent can support and help in solving the issue with school staff.

Feelings of shame or self-blame may sometimes lead to denial of the problem. When asked about how he or she feels about being alone, the child or adolescent may deny feeling lonely and even claim to prefer being alone. Therefore, the adult may believe that everything is in order, as in 'he seems to be doing well alone and doesn't consider being alone a problem, so why force him to act differently?'. However, mistreatment and loneliness can severely impair development into a healthy and happy young person and hence must be prevented, the initial denials notwithstanding. Parents can encourage and help the child or adolescent to spend time with peers, arrange opportunities to get to know them, and help him or her recognise that having friends matters.

QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED AT SCHOOL:

- *How are inter-student peer relations handled with all parents as a group and in one-on-one contact?*
- *How do parents get information about their child's peer relations at school? When can parents ask teachers and school staff about these issues?*
- *What kind of support can the school offer for students who are lonely or excluded from the peer group?*
- *How are the supportive measures introduced to parents?*
- *How is the monitoring of the situation arranged at school level? Who is responsible for it? How do parents get information about how relations in the school are developing and changing?*
- *If the school has a peer support scheme in place, how are the parents of peer supporters advised to support their child in his/her role?*

Supporting healthy online behaviour via good communication between parents and young people

The relationship between parents and schools is a critical aspect of addressing cyber-bullying. School staff can encourage parents and caregivers to talk with their child about bullying and peer relations. Opening lines of communication before the child is actually involved in bullying makes it easier for them to tell you when something happens. Parents can be encouraged to familiarise themselves with school policy and cyber-safety education initiatives, including responsible-use policies. The schools that are most effective in reducing cyber-bullying have ongoing relationships with families and parents and involve young people actively in the development of policy.

The same applies to adolescents' life online. The literature expresses a general sense that adults and young people differ in how they think about the online vs. the offline world: Young people use technology differently than adults do – adults' use tends to be for more practical or business purposes, whereas for young people, technology is a vital part of social life and identity development. For children and young people, the online and offline world provide a holistic arena of communication, socialisation, play, research, and learning³⁵.

It is important for parents to be aware of the significance of adults' conversations with young people about life online. This is an important message. Children and young people's perception of their parents' knowledge of new technology influences how much they accept and value the advice that parents offer in relation to online safety. Parents should be encouraged to make the Internet a part of everyday conversations with their children. Such conversation not only increases young people's tendency to tell adults about what is happening; it also is testament to how great an influence adults can have on children's online behaviour. By talking about what occurs online and by being role models, parents can influence what happens online and can contribute to a friendly atmosphere there.

³⁵ JSCCS, 2011a; Willard, 2011.

Online training course for guardians

"This course has been very useful to me and helped me to have a good dialogue with my child. I listened my child more carefully and have gained insight on how to support him."

Many guardians struggle with the issue of how to deal with questions on bullying, harassment and intimidation, both in terms of how to talk to and support children and young people, as well as what rights and obligations you have as a guardian, school or other actor. Friends has launched an interactive Online Training Course for Guardians. The purpose of the training course is to give guardians better opportunities to support their children.

The content of the simulation aims to give adults tools to take advantage of children and young peoples' right to safety and equality. The e-simulation builds on the most common questions Friends' support team receives from guardians throughout Sweden. It also offers knowledge about the laws regulating children and young peoples' rights to a safe and secure school. Bullied students may feel at a disadvantage or find it difficult to defend themselves. Sexual harassment is behavior of a sexual nature intended to violate a person's self-esteem. Parents/guardians and the school must cooperate to give all children and students a feeling of wellbeing and security, both in and out of school

At the online course parents will be able to practice handling a variety of situations that occur when children and young people subject each other to degrading treatment. The course contains examples of how you can create an effective dialogue with your child, as well as with school staff so that as adults, you can take shared responsibility for your child's wellbeing and development in a school that's free from bullying, violations and harassment.

<http://friends.se/snabbkurs-vuxna-eng/>

★ BRIGHT IDEA

- Ask peer supporters or other volunteer students to speak at the parents' evening to talk about their own online behaviour and experiences of hurtful behaviour online. Peer supporters could, for example, be interviewed as part of the evening's events. Encourage the parents to reflect with their children about what they heard the students say at the parents' evening.

"This was the best parents' evening ever because we really talked about everyday life in families. It was very useful to hear about the rules other families have on children's media use. I think teachers should have more courage to facilitate this kind of discussion with parents."

– Feedback from parents' evening, Finland

Advice for parents and guardians: How to talk about bullying?³⁶

REMEMBER THE POWER OF YOUR EXAMPLE

Managing emotions starts with the parent: what your children see you do is what they will do. Think about how you respond to stressful situations and how you can model good emotional intelligence. Actively listen to the child's feelings. Help in understanding that it's OK to feel sad, angry, or upset sometimes. Once children have accepted and dealt with these feelings, they can think about what caused the emotions and how to deal with the problem. Parents can encourage their children to reflect on their feelings and behaviours in different situations. For example, ask them to think about how they feel when they see somebody being unkind to someone else. Help them understand how a positive mindset can influence their responses and feelings: they have the power to change their emotional response to situations.

TALK ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING AT SCHOOL

Some children may find it hard to talk about bullying and may not respond well to direct questioning. Conversation is easier if you ask open questions about their day at school. Ask about things such as these:

- Who their friends are and what they like about them
- What lunchtime is like at school
 - who they sit / play / hang around with
- How it is during breaks
- How they feel about the relationships with teachers

TALK ABOUT THE INTERNET

Let the Internet be part of your everyday conversations, and talk about both the positive and negative things that happen there. If you as an adult are involved and show a genuine interest in what children and adolescents are doing online, they will be more willing to listen to your advice and also to tell you if something happens.



OFFER YOUR SUPPORT

It is important that children and adolescents feel safe and know that they have an adult close by to whom they can turn for help and support. Tell them you are there for them!

LISTEN AND PROVIDE SUPPORT

Listen and allow the child to express how he or she feels and how he or she experiences various situations. For example, ask your son or daughter to think about how he or she feels when seeing somebody being unkind to someone else. State clearly that bullying and harassment are never OK. If your child has been victimised, explain that the situation can be changed.

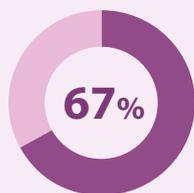
CONTACT THE SCHOOL

Usually in cases of online harassment or cyberbullying, children in the same class or at the same school are involved. Therefore, it's important for the school to know about what is going on. Start by contacting your child's classroom teacher or mentor. Explain what has happened, who is involved, and how long you have known about it. Work together to find a solution.

REPORT AND REMOVE THE HARMFUL CONTENT

If degrading content has been published, help your child remove it and/or report the content to the site concerned. If your child is the victim of a crime, such as slander or unlawful threats, it is important to report the incident to the police.

³⁶ Friends Online Report 2016; Enable Resources for Parents.



67%
of students agree with this statement:

At home we discuss respectful behaviour and how to be nice to other people.



56%
of students agree with this statement:

At home we discuss respectful behaviour and how to be nice to other people online.

WHAT STUDENTS HOPE FOR FROM THEIR PARENTS

- Workshops conducted with students have highlighted the importance of parents' interest in the online environment of young people. Pupils pointed out that it's not worth telling parents about mistreatment online if you can't trust the parents to understand the media environments, apps, and social-media networking sites they use.
- Also, the example that parents give students of online behaviour stimulated a large amount of discussion. Pupils expressed a hope that some kind of media education would be provided for parents too. Being proud of their children, parents don't always take the child's right to privacy into consideration when, for instance, publishing pictures via social media. Also, parents' own media use and the time spent online at home remained a mystery to students.
- It's good to make students' thoughts a subject of discussion at, for example, parents' evenings and to encourage parents to talk about their own online behaviour and media-use habits with their children.

Methods for parental involvement

This section of the chapter introduces various kinds of activity-based methods to be used with parents. The aim for the exercises is mainly to support parents' own reflection about their attitudes and feelings, considering well-being at school, bullying, and mistreatment in both the school and online environments. These methods encourage interaction and conversation between parents, not just between students and parents.

Method 1: Joint discussion with parents (with the 'locker-room picture' example)

► Objectives:

- To facilitate joint discussion with parents about respectful behaviour and safety online
- To practise taking a stand in various kinds of situations and on diverse issues
- To show that there are several ways of looking at things and that a problem can have many individual solutions
- To increase confidence, for preparedness to stand up for one's beliefs
- To create a good starting point for further discussions of current topics

● **Duration:** 45 min

■ **Space:** A classroom or another space allowing work in small groups

Instructions:

Make copies of the cases you want to use so that each parent gets a copy. Ask the parents to read them silently and consider how they would act if faced with the situation described. The parents should take notes on what they would do and why. If you want to, you can also ask the parents to consider what other options there are and to explain why they didn't choose those options.

Divide the parents into pairs, and have them present and discuss their suggestions on how to handle the scenario described. The mission is to agree on a couple of options that both parents find acceptable. It may be good to spend some time discussing which options they don't find suitable and why.

Combine two pairs into a group of four parents. Ask each group to present and discuss the various solutions for addressing the situation, and then try to agree on appropriate solutions. Have the groups present their suggestions and discuss them openly with everyone.

TIP:

- Feel free to write your own case descriptions that seem relevant to your school, especially if there is something in particular that you want the parents to discuss. You could also offer suggested solutions for these cases and use them in a four-corners exercise.

The example case: The locker-room picture

“One afternoon, David discovers that someone has posted a photo of him online. The picture was taken in the locker room after a sports lesson, and you can see that David is about to change his clothes. Several nasty comments were written to accompany the picture, and rumours about David has been shared among students at the school.”

Questions for discussion

- What would you do if you were David’s parents?
- What would you do if the person who took the picture were your child?
- What would you do if you were a parent of the student who had written the nasty comments and shared the picture?
- What knowledge do young people need so that this situation doesn’t occur?
- What knowledge do you need as a parent?
- How could you as an adult prevent this from happening again?

Method 2: The ‘Statements on Loneliness’ exercise for parents

- ▶ **Objective:** To discuss loneliness and friendship with parents by commenting on the statements listed
- **Duration:** 20 min
- **Space:** Enough room for walking around

Instructions:

Explain that one end of the classroom represents ‘I fully agree’ and the other end ‘I completely disagree’. Ask the parents to stand at a point between these two extremes that reflects their view on each statement.

Use (some of) the questions below as a starting point, asking the parents also to comment on each question and explain their view. During the discussion, you may also use the follow-up questions to facilitate deeper reflection. For each question, it is good to provide the parents with sufficient time for discussion and thoughts.

1. Loneliness is difficult to detect.
How can loneliness be detected?
2. It is not necessary to intervene if a student is mostly alone at school.
Who could intervene?
3. A peer supporter can alleviate the loneliness of other students.
What can the peer supporter do?
4. Adults do too little to alleviate loneliness among students.
Why don’t they intervene more?
5. Excluding someone from the group is a form of bullying.
What can be considered bullying?
6. It is important to be everyone’s friend.
What does it mean to be everyone’s friend?
7. One can feel lonely even in the company of others.
How is this possible?
8. Excluding someone from the group is inconsiderate.
Is there a solution?
9. Everyone is lonely sometimes.
Is being alone the same as being lonely?
10. A student who is alone must also feel lonely.
How can one tell whether this is the case?
11. It is important to be able to manage on one’s own.
Does one really have to?
12. The Internet is a good place to make friends.
What kinds of rules for online safety do you know?
13. It is easy to go talk with a child who is alone.
What are some good ways to get to know a person?
14. Adults can help a young person find friends.
Which adults can help? How?

Method 3: Homework for students and parents

The following exercise is to be done by the child with a parent or another adult. The purpose of the exercise is to facilitate mutual understanding and encourage discussion about safety and satisfaction at school. A ready-made interview sheet can be found in the appendices (as Appendix 5).

1. Interview one of your parents or another adult you know, using these questions:

1. Which school did you attend when you were my age?
2. Was there a strong group spirit within the school community? What about your class?
3. What did the school do to strengthen school spirit? Did the school or class organise any activities or events that contributed to a feeling of community? Did you go on field trips?
4. What was the interaction between teachers and students like at your school?
5. In what ways were the voices of the students heard? What kind of influence did they have on decision making and the planning of the education?
6. Did your school have a student association or a prefect system? Did you participate actively?
7. What was the collaboration between home and school like when you were a student?

2. Discuss the following questions together:

- What do you consider a safe and enjoyable school environment?
- What do you consider strong school or group spirit to mean?
- What are the signs of good school spirit?
- Why is it important to strengthen and uphold that team spirit? How can it be strengthened within the school community?
- How can parents help to increase satisfaction at school among their children?

Method 4: Messages for parents

- ▶ **Objective:** To bring the students closer together while providing their parents with information on how the students view friendship and loneliness, by means of background exercises that the young people complete before the parents' evening (their answers are displayed at the evening as a starting point for the discussion)

- **Duration:** 10 min

- ⚙️ **Materials needed:** paper, pens

Instructions:

Ask the students to complete the sentences below. If necessary, you may provide an example, such as 'About their children's friends, parents should at least ask... who the friends are'. You may either hand out copies of the sentences or ask the students to write them down themselves.

When dividing the students into smaller groups, consider what kind of groups would help the quieter students participate actively in the discussion. Make sure that best friends aren't in the same group; rather, give the students an opportunity to talk with classmates they would otherwise seldom interact with. You may also invite peer supporters to help the class with the exercises.

Sentences:

- About their children's friends, parents should at least ask...
- Parents can help their children make friends by...
- If a child or adolescent is lonely, parents can...
Discuss the answers during the parents' evening, and/or make an exhibit to be displayed there.

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Appendix 1

Survey for students about social relations, hurtful behavior and bystander behavior

1. At which grade are you?

2. Are you part of any following groups in your school? (optional)

- student council rep
- peer supporters
- fill in any other participative groups from your school
- none of above

Teacher-pupil relations

3. Do you agree with the following statements?

(likert scale 1-5 from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree")

- Teachers in my school are interested in what's happening in the class
- Teachers in my school are interested in taking care that no one is left alone or without friends
- Teachers in my school are willing to listen students' thoughts and ideas
- Teachers in our school are willing and able to help/support in case of troubles between students
- There is at least one adult in my school to turn to if I get mistreated in school
- There is at least one adult in my school to turn to if I get mistreated online

Peer relations

4. Do you agree with the following statements?

(likert scale 1-5 from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree")

- Other students in my class accept me the way I am.
- In our school, you can gain respect by bullying / mistreating others.
- In our school, you have to be careful and behave "in the right manner" in order to not get bullied / mistreated
- In our class, we support each other in our schoolwork.
- In our class, we have good spirit so that I dare to try and sometimes even fail without being embarrassed.

Your Academic self-efficacy

5. Here are some statements about yourself as a student. Please choose the number that best describes what you think.

(likert scale 1-5 from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree")

- I'm certain I can master the skills taught in class this year.
- I'm certain I can figure out how to do the most difficult class work.
- I can do almost all the work in class if I don't give up.
- Even if the work is hard, I can learn it.
- I can do even the hardest work in this class if I try.

6. Have you, during the last year, been bullied, harassed or in other ways hurt by your peers from school?

- no, I have not
- yes I have, and it has happened in school
- yes I have, and it has happened online / via mobile
- yes I have, and it has happened both in school and online / via mobile

IF YES, QUESTION 7 and 8 (FOR VICTIMIZED STUDENTS ONLY):

7. How often have you experienced bullying or hurtful behavior during the last year?

- It has happened a couple of times
- It has happened about 2-3 times in a month
- It has happened about once a week
- It has happened several times a week

8. What have other students done after you being mistreated?

options: 1) yes and it was helpful, 2) yes, but it was not helpful

Choose only the actions that you have experienced.

- a. Talked, sat down or spent time with me.
- b. Messaged me to encourage me.
- c. Gave me advice about what I should do.
- d. Told an adult.
- e. Helped me to tell an adult.
- f. Told the person(s) to stop.
- g. Helped me get away from situations where the behavior was going on.
- h. Something else, please specify:
- i. Nothing above

9. Does any adult in your school know about you being hurt?

- Yes
- No

If 9 is Yes, then 10a

If 9 is No, then 10b

10. a. What have the adults at school done about the situation?

- a. The adult(s) have intervened the situation or supported me and it helped me.
- b. The adult(s) have intervened the situation or supported me but it didn't help me.
- c. The adult(s) have ignored the situation but I hope they would do something about it.
- d. The adult(s) have ignored the situation and I feel that's OK with me.

10.b. Do you think that adult(s) at your school should know about the situation?

- No, I don't want or feel the need that the adults should know.
- No, I don't believe it would benefit or be helpful for me.
- Yes, it could be good that they would know.

QUESTIONS FOR ALL:

11. When you last time saw someone bullied or mistreated at school, what did you do?

Choose **each** action that suits you.

- a) I don't remember seeing anyone mistreated in school
- b) I talked, sat down or spent time with the person
- c) I sent a message to encourage him/her
- d) I tried to give advice what he/she could do.
- e) I help the person to tell an adult in school.
- f) I told an adult in school about it myself.
- g) I told about it to my parents
- h) I / we told to a peer student
- i) I defended the mistreated person / I tell the person(s) to stop
- j) I didn't do anything of the above
- k) I did something else, please explain:

12. When you last time saw someone mistreated online, what did you do?

Choose **each** action that suits you.

- a) I don't remember seeing anyone mistreated online
- b) I talked, sat down or spent time with the person
- c) I sent a message to encourage him/her
- d) I tried to give advice what he/she could do
- e) I help the person to tell an adult in school
- f) I told an adult in school about it myself
- g) I told about it to my parents
- h) I / we told to a peer student
- i) I defended the mistreated person / I tell the person(s) to stop
- j) I didn't do anything of the above
- k) I did something else, please explain:

13. During this year, your school has put effort in several activities to prevent mistreatment in school. How useful do you think they are?

0 I don't know, and likert scale from "1 not useful at all" to "7 very useful"

- interactive lessons about bullying
- process for resolving bullying incidents
- peer supporters giving lessons to younger students
- peer supporters acting in support of the mistreated or lonely pupils during breaks etc.
- activities or events for building a better climate in school/class, organized by pupils
- activities or events for building a better climate in school/class, organized by school staff

14. What do you think teachers, peer supporters or other students should do so that no one would be bullied at your school?

Appendix 2:

'Our School and Me' interview questions

1. What is your favourite place in the school building or on the school grounds?

2. What is your favourite activity during the school day, and why?

3. What about our school are you particularly proud of?

4. Name a certain activity or event that you think brings students closer together and helps to create a positive atmosphere.

5. If you could change one thing about our school, what would it be?

Appendix 3:

What characterises a well-functioning group?

1. Recall various groups you have been part of (classes, a club, summer-camp groups, etc.). In what kind of groups have you had a good time and felt comfortable and secure? What was it about the group that created the sense of fun and security?

2. Describe what you consider to be a good, well-functioning group. How would you define such a group?

3. In pairs, agree on a common definition of a good and well-functioning group. Base the discussion on your answers to question 2. Write down your final definition.

4. With the pair closest to you, discuss your answers to questions 2–3 and agree on a new common definition. Write your definition both here and on the board or flipchart at the front of the room for everyone to see.

Appendix 4:

Cards for the Hurtful Situations at School exercise

Location	People present	Form of degrading treatment
School canteen	People in the same class	Name-calling
Physical education class	Girls from another class, in the same year	Laughing at someone's sports clothes or equipment
Schoolyard	Eighth-year students	Spreading false rumours
Home economics classroom	Boys from the same class as the victimized student	Pushing
Beginning of class	Male ninth-year students	Not greeting someone
WhatsApp	Girls from the same class as the victimized student	Nasty comments about someone's appearance
Bus stop	Ninth-year students who are strangers to the victimized student	Making fun of what someone is saying
On the way home or to school	Primary-school pupils and a few from the seventh year	Stealing someone's belongings
Classroom	A new student	Making threats

Appendix 5:

Homework for students and parents – Interview sheet

1. Interview one of your parents or another adult you know

1. Which school did you attend when you were my age?

.....
.....

2. Was there a strong team spirit within the school community? What about your class?

.....
.....

3. What did the school do to strengthen the team spirit? Did the school or class organise any activities or events that contributed to a feeling of community? Did you go on field trips?

.....
.....

4. What was the interaction between teachers and students like in your school?

.....
.....

5. In what ways were the voices of the students heard? What kind of influence did they have on decision-making and the planning of the education?

.....
.....

6. Did your school have a student association or a prefect system? Did you participate actively?

.....
.....

7. What was the collaboration between homes and the school like when you were a student?

.....
.....

2. Discuss the following questions together:

• What do you consider a safe and enjoyable school environment?

.....

.....

.....

.....

• What do you consider a strong team spirit?

.....

.....

.....

.....

• What are the signs of a strong team spirit?

.....

.....

.....

.....

• Why is it important to strengthen and uphold the team spirit? How can it be strengthened within the school community?

.....

.....

.....

• How can parents help increase school satisfaction among their children?

.....

.....

.....



Bullying prevention in the digital age needs to build on youth engagement and partnership between school staff, parents and students. Beyond conventional anti-bullying efforts, the approach provided here argues for a better learning environment with positive and supportive teacher-student and peer relations. Promoting student-led actions and supportive bystander behaviour is essential among adolescents who value their autonomy and communicate in digital environments.

The material provides a preventive approach and a practical guide to integrate youth participation and digital dimension in bullying prevention. It provides tools for a whole-school process, which includes the anti-bullying policy, student-centred needs assessment, class activities for all teachers, the use of peer supporters or other peer-led activities, and involvement of parents. The material integrates theoretical knowledge and recent studies on bullying with practical time-tested activities and examples from schools. The manuscript is based on the work of several European NGOs working with schools for decades.

Mannerheim League for Child Welfare
Toinen linja 17
00530 Helsinki
FINLAND
www.mll.fi/peersupport