

SETTING GOALS

It is sensible to begin by setting out what you hope to achieve through an anti-bullying program for your school.

Here are my suggestions:

The general aim of the program is to make the school a safer, happier place for everyone.

Progress in achieving this goal is indicated by:

1. A reduction in the number of persons who are victimised by others.
2. A reduction in the severity of victimisation.
3. A reduction in the number of people who engage in bullying others.
4. An increase in the support that is provided to those who are victimised in any way.

You need to consider ways in which progress towards these goals can be assessed. The following are some suggestions:

1. Make use of anonymous questionnaires from which reliable and relevant self-report data can be obtained. (Section 20 describes available questionnaire resources.)
2. Make assessments before the anti-bullying program is put into effect and again some time afterwards. Allow at least a one-year interval between testing. Remember that a program may actually raise awareness of what constitutes bullying, and that if there is a significant reduction in reported victimisation, this probably underestimates the actual reduction.
3. In your analysis of the data, identify precisely where and in what ways changes have occurred, for example according to year and gender, and in relation to both behaviour and attitudes. You may also wish to assess whether there have been changes in behaviour and attitudes towards specific groups, such as ethnic minorities.
4. Gauge whether the help provided to victimised students has really been effective in helping them to cope.
5. One focus should be on how students who have engaged in repeated bullying have changed (if at all) as a result of school disciplinary activities and/or counselling.
6. Gather supplementary data based on judgments from students and teachers who were present at school before and after the intervention.
7. Because a program may have many elements, it is useful to identify which elements were responsible for any change.

MAKING A PLAN

Here is a plan that may be adopted (or adapted) to reduce bullying in one's school.

- 1. Educate the school community about bullying.** This is a necessary first step and implies both an understanding of the phenomena of bullying and a knowledge of what can be done to reduce its occurrence. The educational process should include in different ways and to a different extent the school staff, students and parents.
- 2. Find out what is happening among members of the school community that is relevant to bullying.** You need to understand the nature and scope of the problem before it can be effectively addressed.
- 3. Develop an appropriate and well supported anti-bullying policy.** This should be based on the school's understanding of bullying, and especially on what has been discovered about bullying at your school. It should provide a guide as to what is to be done.
- 4. Establish what staff can do in their everyday work to reduce bullying and support students who are being victimised at school.** What can be done should be communicated to all staff members and serve as a guide and reminder of how they can help ease the problem.
- 5. Ensure that teachers talk with students about bullying.** Provide guidance to teachers on how this can be done in such a way as to discourage bullying and gain student cooperation in countering peer victimisation.
- 6. Empower students.** Create opportunities and provide necessary support or training for students to play a positive role in countering bullying and improving peer relations in the school.
- 7. Devise procedures for dealing appropriately with incidents of bullying.** Alternative approaches need to be considered and evaluated, and distinctions made according to the nature and severity of the bullying.
- 8. Provide support for those who are victimised.** Guidelines are needed on the role staff may play in helping students involved in bully/victim problems and how help can best be provided.
- 9. Work cooperatively with parents.** This includes setting out how parents can be included in plans to reduce bullying, and how the school can work most effectively with parents whose children become involved in problems at school as victims or as bullies.