



Bullying Prevention Toolkit



Building Positive Classroom Communities

Lessons and Activities for K–5 Educators

Introduction

Students deserve to feel safe, valued, and supported in their learning environment, yet bullying behaviors can disrupt trust, belonging, and overall well-being. This downloadable toolkit offers practical activities and resources to help educators nurture kindness, cooperation, and empathy in the classroom. Fostering positive interactions reduces the risk of bullying and creates a welcoming environment where every student can thrive.

Although we are sharing this toolkit during National Bullying Prevention Month in October, its strategies and activities support kindness, respect, and safety throughout the school year.

This toolkit provides educators with a proactive, practical framework for bullyproofing classrooms and schools. Drawing on Responsive Classroom practices and Fly Five curriculum resources, these developmentally appropriate lessons and activities guide students to develop empathy, responsibility, and respect all year.

Our goals for this toolkit are for educators to:

- Understand what bullying is and how it impacts the classroom community
- Recognize early “gateway” behaviors that can escalate into bullying if left unchecked
- Foster a positive, respectful classroom culture for all students
- Reinforce themes of belonging, empathy, respect, kindness, and responsibility



Bullyproofing in Elementary School

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is intentional, unwanted, and aggressive behaviors that occur when one person or group uses physical or social power over another. It is repeated or has the potential to be repeated and causes pain, humiliation, or harm. Bullying is different from conflict between equals because it involves an imbalance of power. It can take many forms, including insults, exclusion, damaging belongings, physical harm, or spreading rumors in person or online.

Bullying can be:

- In person: verbal, social, or physical
- Direct: physical aggression or name-calling
- Indirect: exclusion or rumor spreading
- Online or digital: cyberbullying

Bullying Can Begin with Small “Gateway” Behaviors

Bullying often begins with small, subtle acts of disrespect or meanness, like brushing against someone “by accident,” taking their belongings, or using unkind words. Examples of gateway behaviors in school include:

- Eye-rolling, sighing, or mocking
- Whispering insults about a classmate
- Taking someone’s snack or materials
- Excluding a peer from play or conversation

These gateway behaviors can escalate into more serious aggression if ignored. Teachers and school staff play a critical role in addressing these behaviors early. By noticing these early signs of contempt quickly, respectfully, and consistently, teachers can prevent them from growing into chronic bullying.

Bullyproofing Strategies

A firm, matter-of-fact, and nonpunitive approach is the most effective way to stop bullying. The key is to respond calmly and consistently by:

- Implementing logical consequences
- Modeling kindness
- Practicing the skills that promote positive, empathetic behavior
- Teaching how to report bullying
- Awareness of hot spots: lightly supervised areas of the school, outside the classroom, such as the playground, cafeteria, hallways, and school bus

Bullying and Technology

Cyberbullying is bullying that happens through digital devices and online platforms. Like traditional bullying, it involves an imbalance of power, but it takes the form of sending, posting, or sharing harmful, false, or mean content. It may also include spreading private information to cause embarrassment or humiliation. Because it often feels anonymous and indirect, the person bullying may not see the harm they are causing and may escalate their behavior. Cyberbullying can be constant—happening anytime, anywhere—and its effects can profoundly disrupt students' well-being and classroom communities. Introducing students to the risks, warning signs, and the skills needed to be digitally aware and responsible is essential.



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ACTIVITY 1

Mini-Lesson: Awareness of Hot Spots and Reporting Hurtful Behavior

Objective

How to report if students are hurting each other outside of the classroom

Materials

During [Morning Message](#), ask students where in school they feel safe and where they feel unsafe. Under the questions, include lines or boxes for the school bus, cafeteria, playground, hallways, bathrooms, and other areas that might be “hot spots” in your school.

Dear Friendly First Graders,

We are working together to make school safe for everyone. Put a check in the box if you do not feel safe in:

School bus	Cafeteria
Halls	Bathrooms
Playground	Someplace else

Your teacher

Instructions

1. Begin by looking at the Morning Message together.

- What do you notice?
- Where do students seem to feel safe?
- Where do they feel unsafe?
- You can go deeper for students in grades 3–5:
 - What have you noticed in the [name of “hot spot”] that makes it feel unsafe?
 - Why do you think those behaviors happen there?

2. Ask: *If something is happening [on the playground, in the cafeteria, in the hall] that makes you feel unsafe or unwelcome, what might you do?*

- Optional: Prompt students' thinking by referring to a story (for example, the children report to their classroom *teacher* in the book titled *Nobody Knew What to Do.*)



3. Ask a follow-up question about who else students might report to if their teacher is absent.
 - Write the names of people the students suggest around the borders of your graph or map so they can see that the adults at school surround them and keep them safe.
4. Close the mini-lesson by pointing to the Morning Message and highlighting the adults who can help keep them safe at school.

Follow-up and Extension Ideas

- Check in with students after lunch and recess
 - Ask students to hold up their fingers (one through five) to show how safe and welcome they felt in the cafeteria and playground.
- Ask during the Morning Message:
 - *What can you do today in the cafeteria to ensure everyone has someone to sit with?*
 - *What can you do during recess to make sure everyone has someone to play with?*



ACTIVITY 2

Morning Meeting and Closing Circle Reflection Questions

[Morning Meeting](#) and [Closing Circle](#) are powerful times to build community and proactively address bullying prevention. These daily routines allow students to reflect, share, and practice empathy, respect, and cooperation skills. By weaving in questions, discussions, and activities that highlight kindness, teachers set a positive tone at the start of the day and reinforce it at the end of the day. This consistency strengthens classroom relationships and helps prevent bullying by creating a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment where every student feels they belong.

Choose a reflection question to add to the daily Morning Message. Label it a “Thinking Question” and ask students to brainstorm an answer they can share during Morning Meeting. Ask the closing reflection question at the end of the school day.

Theme: Belonging

- *What helps you feel like you belong in our classroom?*
- *How can we make sure everyone feels included in games and group work?*
- *What does it look like when a class is a welcoming place for all students?*
- **Closing Circle reflection:** *What’s one way you helped someone feel included today?*

Theme: Empathy

- *How can we show we understand how someone else is feeling?*
- *What might you do if you notice a classmate looking upset?*
- *Why is it important to listen carefully to others’ ideas and experiences?*
- **Closing Circle reflection:** *When did you show empathy today, or did someone show it to you?*

Theme: Respect

- *What does respect look like in our words and actions?*
- *How can we show respect even when we disagree with someone?*
- *What's one way to practice respect with your classmates today?*
- **Closing Circle reflection:** *What's one way you showed respect today?*

Theme: Kindness

- *What small act of kindness can make someone's day better?*
- *How do you feel when someone shows kindness to you?*
- *What's one way we can spread kindness as a class this week?*
- **Closing Circle reflection:** *Who showed kindness today, and how did it make a difference?*

Theme: Responsibility

- *What are respectful ways to befriend or include a classmate?*
- *What might you do if you see someone being mistreated?*
- *Why is it important to take responsibility for how we treat others?*
- **Closing Circle reflection:** *What's one thing you'll do tomorrow to keep our class a safe and welcoming place?*



ACTIVITY 3

Group Activities

Short, playful, and engaging group activities, whether during Morning Meeting, at the start or end of class, or to kick off the school day, are proactive ways to practice and reinforce positive behaviors. These quick exercises allow students to practice kindness, cooperation, empathy, and respect in a low-pressure, fun setting. By making social and behavioral skills interactive and enjoyable, teachers help students internalize these behaviors and strengthen the classroom community, creating a culture where positive interactions are noticed, valued, and repeated.

Include these activities in your Morning Meeting or as an opener or closer to your class period or the school day.

Kindness Chain

1. **Prepare:** Cut construction paper into strips (about 1 to 2 inches wide, 6 to 8 inches long). Ensure several staplers, tape, and markers are available so students can write and attach their strips easily. Prepare a few written examples ahead of time to model the expectations and to get the chain started.
2. **Introduce the activity:** During Morning Meeting or Closing Circle, explain that each student will share one kind act they've done or seen a classmate do.
3. **Create the chain links:** Invite students to write their kind acts on paper strips. If needed, provide support for younger students.
4. **Assemble the chain:** Staple or tape the strips together as interlocking loops. Hang the kindness chain in a visible location in the classroom.
5. **Grow the chain:** Encourage students to continue noticing small acts of kindness and add them to the chain. Over time, the growing display becomes a tangible representation of the caring culture in your classroom.

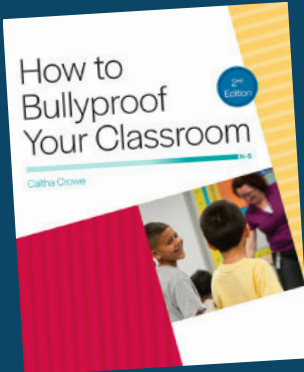
What Would You Do?

This activity helps students practice empathy, problem-solving, and respectful responses to bullying and exclusion. By walking through real-life scenarios, children can think ahead about how they might respond in the moment, making them more likely to act with kindness and confidence when challenges arise.

1. **Prepare** a few short, age-appropriate scenarios that reflect situations your students may encounter at school. Here are a few suggested scenarios to help you get started:
 - Kalya gets on the school bus. Sarah, Tanisha, and Deepka quickly rearrange their backpacks so there's no room for Kayla to sit with them.
 - Harrison, a young student, gets off the bus in the morning wearing a new hat. Bryan and Abe, who are older, snatch Paul's hat, throwing it around the courtyard and laughing.
 - It's writing time, and Finn doesn't have a pencil. He takes JT's pencil without asking.
 - It's recess time, and a group of students is playing dodgeball. Other students gather around and start cheering for the players to get a specific player out.
2. **Read** one scenario aloud to the class.
3. **Ask:** *"What would you do in this situation?"* Give students time to think, then invite volunteers to share their ideas.
4. **Discuss** together which responses are safe, kind, and effective. Reinforce key points, such as seeking help from an adult, offering support to the targeted student, or using respectful words to stand up for others.
5. **Repeat** with other scenarios as time allows.

Bullyproofing All Year

While National Bullying Prevention Month in October raises awareness, the work of building a safe, respectful, and inclusive classroom is ongoing. We hope this toolkit provides you with strategies and activities that can be woven into daily routines and lessons throughout the school year, helping you proactively nurture positive behaviors and prevent bullying every day.



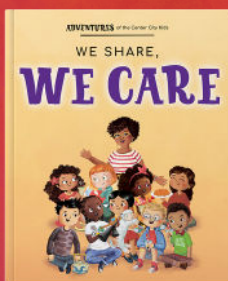
Learn more!

Get your copy of *How to Bullyproof Your Classroom* today!



FLY FiVE

The Fly Five curriculum includes specific bullyproofing lessons (indicated with an icon) that foster prosocial behavior, empathy, kindness, and friendship to create a more positive learning community.



AVENUE  BOOKS™

Avenue A is a publishing imprint home to the IPPY Award–winning The Adventures of the Center City Kids. The Adventure Series supports literacy and the development of positive social and behavioral skills, such as empathy, to prepare students to manage emotions and respect others.

