

School Stories

Brief background to school initiative

The issue of bullying was regarded as important to the school and general community. It was beginning to create problems within the school affecting students' learning. The school began by surveying students about bullying and ensured open and consistent communication with parents, staff and students about the level of bullying that was occurring at the school.

School profile

- Non-metropolitan government school
- 500 students
- Years: F-7

Key understandings and Competencies - Example 1

Action

This school believed that raising the awareness of its students, staff and parents was the first step in addressing bullying behaviour. To begin, the school conducted a bullying behaviour awareness week. The school took a collaborative and cross-curricular approach for the week. Collaborative teams of teachers were involved and provided with a half day to plan activities around the theme of bullying.

Activities included:

- songs and poems about bullying, poster making, puppet making for use in plays and role-playing based on the theme
- LOTE activities such as examining body language across different cultures and storytelling
- science activities such as drawing scientific comparisons between nurturing human relationships and nurturing relationships in society and nature



- maths activities conducting graphing exercises based on the bullying survey and creating tallies of positive and negative incidents in the classroom
- creating books that exemplify positive approaches to bullying (which were used in buddy reading), drawing cartoons depicting responses to bullying, diary entries guided by the theme and letter writing
- comparisons of schoolyard bullying to bullying in the workplace, lessons on conflict resolution skills and role-playing
- behaviour modification games
- the planting of a friendship garden and friendship rocks

A staff survey was conducted following this week. The results of the survey suggested that teachers enjoyed the week and the opportunity to plan activities with colleagues. Teachers believed the week had raised the awareness of both students and teachers, but also of parents. The school reported that students enjoyed the collaborative approach, particularly the opportunities it provided and the common theme between classes. Staff also received positive feedback from parents who appreciated the open and honest manner in which the school was dealing with the issue.

Following this week, the school developed a policy on bullying in collaboration with students, parents and teachers to ensure the whole-school community would have greater ownership of the policy. All teachers were asked to discuss with their class what bullying is, how they feel about bullying, what they could do if bullied, what students, teachers, and parents could do to prevent bullying at the school and what could be done to make sure the policy is working. The policy was developed from these responses and worded in the vernacular of the students.

The school adopted a whole-school positive incentive plan. This included the distribution of faction tokens for positive behaviour, honour certificates, “Aussie of the Month” awards, positive visits to the principal, work displayed at the Aboriginal Medical Centre, the Community Centre and the front office and positive behaviour banners awarded to the class with the most cards. Throughout the process communication between parents, staff, students and the community was a high priority. This was achieved through newsletters, articles, school assemblies, community displays and representation in the press.

What we learnt

Difficulties encountered

Getting all staff to accept the program and the additional effort required was initially a problem at the school.

Overcoming difficulties

These initial problems were overcome by giving staff time to collaborate and discuss policy, plans and activities, and setting realistic and achievable goals. Having parents involved and showing an interest also highlighted the importance of the program to staff. This was achieved through the involvement of the P&C as well as during parent-teacher meetings.