

School Stories

Brief background to school initiative

It became evident that bullying was a problem at this school. There was a significant amount of media attention on the issue at that time and, subsequently, the school psychologist and deputy principal decided to take some positive action. The school adopted a whole-school approach to combat bullying behaviour. They placed an emphasis on cooperation with colleagues, communication and consistency in consequences and a commitment to creating a positive classroom atmosphere.

School profile

- Government school
- 720 students
- Years: 8–12

Key Understandings and Competencies – Example 2

Action

The school introduced the Treat Everyone Decently (TED) program as the cornerstone of their anti-bullying policy. The TED school committee trained people, including teachers, and managed student behaviour, house points and rewards, issues of tolerance and an overall review. They also addressed the school assemblies. The program was designed to enhance self-esteem and positive behaviour. Prizes in the form of letters of commendation and other rewards were included.

The TED program was taught as a core subject to emphasise the importance that the school placed on the matter. The same teachers taught it each year and were, therefore, able to build on the students' knowledge. Bullying was addressed in the Year 8 component of the program and revised in Years 9 and 10. The four bullying sessions defined what bullying was and the school's policy on bullying, examined ways bullying could be reported, and what students could do about bullying. Sessions were interactive and encouraged students to ask questions and brainstorm solutions. Each school department was asked



to integrate the TED messages into their curriculum. The school provided staff professional learning to facilitate this process.

The school also ran a TED Plus program where teachers acted as mentors and were matched with students who had behavioural problems or learning difficulties or were unhappy at school. The students met daily with their mentor and a behaviour card was kept which both completed. The behavioural expectations were explained in simple terms, for example, the student will not interrupt in class, will not constantly talk to the person next to them and will listen to instructions. By concentrating on a small part of a student's behaviour, this process provided tangible aims for the student. The program ran for four weeks and at the end of that time the student's behaviour was reviewed. The student knew that their mentor was not going to judge them, but rather work with them through every situation that arises. This system was extremely successful. The school made an attempt to use friends to monitor students' behaviour, as they usually respond well to their own peers. For example, in a particular group of friends, one girl was exerting her power over the others and on one girl in particular. The student bullying was taken aside and it was pointed out that through her behaviour she stood the risk of losing all of her friends. She was then asked to choose two friends to monitor her behaviour and report to the teachers. This had a significant impact on the level of bullying that was occurring.

What we learnt

Difficulties encountered

The school struggled to recruit enough people to run the program. There were unsuccessful attempts to get teachers to take on the responsibility of the program. Furthermore, initially not all bullying incidents were dealt with consistently; teachers did not always follow the procedures.

Recommendations for other schools

This school emphasised the need to get parents involved as early as possible as their support was essential to the success of the anti-bullying program. They also suggested that there be a program "launch" with high levels of publicity and information; suggesting something like a whole-school sausage sizzle. This serves two purposes; it makes the program look important (if it looks important people tend to think it is important) and it provides a great opportunity for the whole school to come together with teachers, students and parents and receive information. The school also suggested setting realistic targets for teachers instead of overloading them.