

Formative Consequences for Students Who Bully

Bullying is about power and children naturally experiment with their power and may become involved in bullying. The important thing is to help them learn from the experience.

Formative consequences not only provide a clear message that bullying is unacceptable, but also build awareness and skills to promote the students' responsibility, and positive leadership (Pepler & Craig, 2000). Formative consequences provide support for children and youth to learn the relationship skills and acquire the insights that they are lacking. In this way, the consequences for bullying can provide an opportunity to educate and support children and youth who are in difficulty. When children bully, their privileges can be withdrawn and replaced by an instructive activity from this list of suggestions below:

To encourage empathy

1. Help your students learn the language of emotions to identify their own feelings and those of others. Help them identify and label feelings of shame, embarrassment, anger, fear, sadness, etc.
2. Have the students who bully create a poster, collage, or drawing of what it must feel like to be bullied. Talk about the feelings that children who are bullied might experience.
3. Give the students who bully a research project where they have to learn about the prevalence, nature, and consequences of bullying and write a paper or create a class presentation based on their findings.
3. Have the students who bully interview an adult or older student about their bullying experiences and the impact it had on him/her.
4. Assign a project requiring the students who bully to research a historical figure or celebrity who has been bullied.
5. Have the students read a novel about bullying and write a character study (e.g., *Blubber* by Judy Blume)
6. Have the students watch a movie about bullying and describe the characters and the consequences of their actions (e.g., *Mean Girls*, *Back to the Future*). Encourage them to focus on the feelings of the victimized character. Help them to identify these feelings by looking out for facial expressions, body posture, and tone of voice.
7. Have your students identify instances of bullying in the media (e.g., television, newspapers, radio, magazines, websites) and talk with them about their reactions to these instances.
8. Talk with your students about their own strengths and weaknesses and how they can use power to help, not hurt, others.

To make amends

Bullying is wrong and hurtful. It is a relationship problem that requires a relationship solution. The goal is to repair the relationship in a way that is genuine and caring and restore the relationship to a respectful foundation. Sometimes children aren't at a point where they are able to restore a relationship. At the least, the child needs to find ways to be respectful of other students and their rights to feel safe.

If your students can restore the relationship in a genuine way, without being forced, help them find a way to make amends.

9. If they are sorry for their behaviour and genuinely want to make amends, have the students who bully write a letter or card of apology to the children who were victimized.
10. Encourage the students who bully to make a verbal apology that includes taking responsibility for the behaviour and indicating what they will do to ensure the children who were victimized feel better. It is important that the children who were victimized want to participate in this process and that the apology is given privately rather than publicly. Apologies conducted in front of others can leave both children feeling embarrassed.
11. Encourage your students to repair or restore property or personal belongings that were damaged as a result of the bullying.

To help your students associate power with kindness and prosocial activities

12. Encourage the students who bully to perform 5 acts of kindness and describe how they felt after completing each act.
13. Encourage the students who bully to observe other students in school or individuals in the community and look for acts of kindness. Have the students describe what they observed and how they think the people felt.
14. Have the students accompany a teacher or playground supervisor during recess and lunch and assist in resolving disputes among students in a prosocial manner.
15. Identify strengths and abilities possessed by the students who bully and provide them with opportunities to highlight these skills in ways that help others. For example, if a student who bullies excels at soccer, have the child assist with this activity with younger students.