



The ABC's of Bully-Proofing Your Classroom

- A** **Avoid** sarcasm and put-downs. Model respect for others.
- B** **Be** aware of the difference between bullying and immature age-appropriate behavior. Peper (2000) offers suggestions for teacher diagnosis which include:
- Was the act severe?
 - Is this an isolated incident or behavior you have seen before in this child?
 - Is the victim part of the bully's peer group?
 - Is the victim upset or clearly traumatized by the incident?
 - Is the victim being shunned or ostracized?
 - Does the victim have any friends or supporters?
 - Are the bystanders unsympathetic to his/her plight?
- C** **Connect** with all students...including the bully. They are less likely to bully in your class if they respect you and do not want to disappoint you.
- D** **Develop** a sense of family among your students whereby they look out for the best interest of their classmates.
- E** **Express** praise students (privately, if necessary) who intervene in bullying situations.
- F** **Find** literature that teaches anti-bullying themes.
- G** **Give** options to students. Remind students that you will offer multiple solutions to bullying problems they bring you, and that you will involve them in deciding what steps to take to resolve it.
- H** **Honor** codes. Bully-proofing pledges can be used in your classroom.
- I** **Interviews** can be conducted by students with a friend or family member who has been bullied and identify the strategy they could have used to handle the situation.
- J** **Jump** into role-play situations with students that develop empathy and teach bully-proofing skills.
- K** **Know** the bullying "red flags" that signal a student is being bullied:
- The class snickers when a particular student enters the room, answers a question, or draws attention to himself/herself.
 - A student is never chosen or is left out of activities.
 - A student's grades, attendance, and demeanor declines.

- L** **Lead** class meetings to promote a sense of family in the classroom. At those meetings:
- Emphasize the importance of not bullying in your classroom.
 - Develop empathy by having students discuss a time when they or a friend were bullied and how it made them feel.
 - Role-play bullying situations and strategies when confronted by a bully. Do these as often as necessary until they are easy for the students to recall.
 - Role-play how to help a friend who is bullied.
- M** **Manage** time in the day to teach, role-play, and practice positive comebacks to the bully's behavior. They are designed to convey to the bully that the actions do not bother the victim. Remember, the person who doesn't care usually has the power. Children need a strategy to use when confronted by a bully and need to select the one they are most comfortable with. These strategies are designed to avoid reinforcing the bully's actions.
- The best comeback is to ignore their words and go to friends or adults.
 - Agree with the bully and mirror the insult. "You're right. I couldn't catch a ball if I had two gloves."
 - Change the subject.
 - Distract the bully by asking an unrelated question. "What time is lunch?"
 - Act surprised and walk away. "I'm disappointed you feel that way."
 - Use "I" statements and tell the bully how you feel. "I don't like being called names and would appreciate it if you would stop."
- N** **No-Bullying** Classroom Rules may include:
- We don't hit, tease, exclude, or call other students names.
 - We will all team up to stop bullies by helping other students who are bullied.
 - We will have the courage to tell adults when we see or hear bullying.
- O** **Offer** a means for students to report bullying in your classroom.
- P** **Praise** yourself and colleagues for caring enough to help a child who is being bullied.
- Q** **Question** victims carefully. Their trust in you is critical in confiding bullying events in the future.
- R** **Rehearse** the tips for counseling the bully. Some of these may not come naturally until you have practiced them.
- S** **Sarcasm** from any employee is bullying personified. Avoid it, confront it, and eliminate it.
- T** **Take** any report of bullying seriously. What may appear as "child's play" to us can be a traumatizing experience for a child.
- U** **Use** the bully survey at different points of the year to assess bullying in your classroom and school.
- V** **Value** colleagues who may have longstanding relationships with the bully or the victim. They may be better equipped to use that relationship to provide counseling or discipline.

These colleagues may include the counselor, school secretary, PE teacher, media specialist, and/or administrator

- W** **Watch** “un-owned areas” of the school for bullying behavior.
- X** **eXamine** your own classroom management strategies to see if you are allowing bullying behavior inadvertently.
- Y** **Year-round** effort is essential to create a bully-proof school. Focusing on it one month is good, but concentrated effort is required to truly address the problem.
- Z** **Zip-lock** any opportunity for bullying to take place in your classroom by creating a classroom based on respect and compassion for one another.