



## **TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS**

### **DESCRIPTION**

There is so much for teachers to do, but if the classroom and the larger school community is not a place where students feel safe, welcome, and accepted, it can be difficult for them to learn. Creating safe, welcoming communities is the job of the entire school—teachers, administrators, staff, and students—but even small changes can make a big difference. This resources suggests some mini-lessons and ideas for “keeping the peace” in your classroom.

These mini-lessons can be done one at a time or put together for a longer lesson. The brief lessons are so simple that a whole school could agree to do one or more at the same time of day to make sure all students did them. While these mini-lessons will get you started, there are suggestions for longer, more in-depth versions of these lessons if you would like to go further.

**Grade Level:** Grades 9-12.

**Subject Area(s):** Social Studies and Language Arts; any class during a “special focus” month, during a diversity session or in a diversity club, in a leadership seminar or class.

### **Purpose**

- To identify causes of bullying, harassment, and/or violence
- To understand the importance of creating safe, welcoming school communities
- To identify and practice strategies for preventing and disrupting bullying, harassment, and/or violence
- To encourage community building through activities and storytelling



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### Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, each student will

- Understand the deeper roots and causes of prejudice and violence
- Have created and practiced strategies for de-escalating tense situations.
- Have shared and listened to stories designed to encourage empathy and community building.

### Materials Needed

All Activities:

- Teacher Instructions, including lesson plan
- 4 x 6 Index Cards, one for each student

## TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS: MINI-LESSONS

### GETTING A CLEAR PICTURE (15-20 minutes for each activity)

In order to have an honest conversation about bullying, harassment, conflict, and/or violence in students' lives, it is important to create an environment in which students can tell the truth honestly and openly without fearing criticism. Two ways of getting a clear picture follow; one uses storytelling, the other uses physical movement. You can use either activity or both.

### TELLING OUR STORIES

Introduce the general topic of violence and personal safety to your classroom but do not engage in classroom discussion. Tell students that it's important that we all have a clear picture of how safe or unsafe we feel at school, in our communities, and at home if we want to address violence. Tell students they will have the opportunity to share their own experiences around safety, peace, conflict, and violence through anonymous writing.

Hand out large (4" x 6") index cards. Ask students to take 2 minutes to list on one side of the index card every situation in which they have felt harassed, bullied, and/or physically afraid. Then ask them to take 5 minutes to write about one of those incidents, including basic details and how they felt during and after the incident on the other side of the index card. Their names should not be on the card. Have students fold cards in half and then collect the cards in a basket; jumble them together. Place students in small groups of 3-4. Have each student pick a card from the basket. In their groups, each student should read aloud the story (not the brainstorm list) on the card he/she picked out.



Once students have finished (this should take 5 minutes), gather students together and have students brainstorm a list of what they heard, especially what the stories have in common. Keep a list on the board. End the mini-lesson by discussing that fear, conflict, violence are common and should not be kept to ourselves; encourage students to share their stories with one another and with adults who can help them and to remember these stories and their own experiences whenever they feel provoked to enter into or start a conflict.

### **TAKING A POSITION**

Ask students to stand in a straight line, all facing forward (you will need to make room for students to move a few feet in either direction of the line). Tell students you will ask a series of questions, which they will answer by moving either to the right or the left. They should move without talking; let them know that after the activity there will be time to discuss what they felt, learned, and saw. Choose one side to be “yes” and one to be “no”; staying in the middle means “I’m not sure.” Ask all or a selection of the following question in rapid succession, reminding students which side is “yes” and which is “no”; tell students to take a quick look at where people are after each question and then tell them to “get back on track” (i.e., to the middle) for the next question.

Questions:

- Have you at any time as a student (grade 1 through today) felt unsafe at school—you define what “unsafe” means?
- Have you ever been harassed or bullied?
- Have you ever felt physically threatened by another?
- Have you ever avoided a place because you feared being harassed or bothered by another?
- Have you ever witnessed another being bullied or harassed?
- Do you expect adults to intervene when a young person is being bullied or harassed?
- Have you ever seen another person intervene when someone was being bullied or harassed?
- Have you ever seen a victim stand up to the aggressor?
- Do you think you would intervene if you saw someone being harassed or bullied?

Have students return to their seats silently. Then lead a discussion about what surprised them during the activity, why they answered as they did, and what they would like to change. This conversation can be as long and as free-ranging as you have time for and as you think appropriate for your students.



### **DEFINE YOUR TERMS (10 minutes)**

It's important to help students distinguish between various terms and to evaluate which ones are positive, which negative, and which are complex and contextual. Write a number of terms having to do with conflict, anger, peacemaking, and so on. Consider using some of the following terms: Bully, Harass, Conflict, Violence, Hate Crime, Intervene, Escalation, Mediation, Harmony, Conflict Resolution, and Peacemaking. Ask students to define and to provide examples of each term. Determine which terms are always negative, always positive, and which ones depend on context. If there is time, draw distinctions between terms like "conflict" and "bully," making clear that having a conflict or disagreement is an acceptable and normal part of life, whereas bullying can never be acceptable.

### **KNOW THE CAUSES (10 minutes)**

Too often victims of bullying and harassment are blamed for "inviting" or "encouraging" harassment or bullying; this is another example of "blaming the victim." It is tempting to blame the victim because it removes the randomness and threat from violence, making us feel safe since we are not doing/would not do whatever the victim did. Instead of blaming the victim, though, we need to know why bullying and harassment happen; in this way, we can be allies with victims and identify, and hopefully stop, any tendencies we might have to bully or harass another.

Write "Causes of Bullying / Harassment" on the board. Have students brainstorm all the causes they can think of in 3 minutes—this should move quickly. Have two to three students at the board writing down the responses. After three minutes, ask the class if they agree with all the causes up there and why. Ask students to separate the causes into two lists: victim and aggressor. Put a "V" or "A" next to each cause. Take some time to discuss whether another person can make me do something in response; in other words, no matter how annoying, different, or whatever a person is, we have control over our own responses. Someone might make me mad, but that doesn't force me to hit him or her. Move discussion to causes related to the aggressor. Make sure students identify such causes as, seeking attention, seeking power, seeking control, anger at other issues in one's life, and learned behavior from home.

### **IDENTIFY INTERVENTIONS (10 minutes)**

Students need to feel that they can act for their own good and for the good of others without getting involved in violence. Create a simple scenario that involves harassment or bullying (see the resource "Finding New Words: A Resource for Addressing Bullying at School" on [www.racebridgesforschools.com](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com) site for some examples). Describe the scenario to your class. Have students discuss the scenario in pairs. For one minute, pairs should discuss what the person being bullied or harassed could do to stop the problem



without violence. Have some pairs share their ideas. Then, pairs should spend another minute discussing what an on-looker could do to intervene without violence. Have some different pairs share their ideas. As a class create a list of the best ideas to put on the board.

If students don't identify the following intervention possibilities during class, consider sharing the them:

- **Stop the behavior**
  - Cut it out!
  - Keep your hands to yourself!
  - Leave him alone!
  - That is NOT okay!
  
- **Educate**
  - Let's not judge other on the basis of race (sex, religion, sexual orientation, etc.); that's not a measure of someone's character.
  - You might think you were just fooling around, but teasing someone to that extent, in front of others is humiliating and frightening. And, it's bullying and against school rules.
  - It doesn't matter that s/he annoys you. Using nasty language and spreading rumors is wrong. You can control your own behavior.
  - That's unacceptable; it's never funny to make someone else feel bad or scared.
  - Your behavior says more about the kind of person you are than it does about [name].

### **PRACTICING NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTIONS (20-40 minutes)**

After the above mini-lesson, you might want to have students actually practicing intervening when they see someone being harassed or bullied because it will be easier for students to stand up for themselves and others if they have actually done it rather than just discussed it. Provide students with the same or another scenario, place them in small groups of 4-5 students. Have groups identify a victim, an aggressor, and on-lookers. First, they should role-play the scenario so that the victim intervenes for him or herself; the other students should provide feedback. Then they should role-play again, this time allowing one of the on-lookers to intervene. If there is time, different scenarios could be role played and students could take on different roles. At least one role play should be done in front of the entire class so that you and the class can analyze how the interventions went and suggest other ways of intervening.



Consider having students create the scenarios from their own experiences or out of their own concerns. It might be especially helpful to have students enact a scenario before the class that they haven't revealed to the class so that the other students don't know what's going on or what will happen; this will help make the role play seem more real.

### **FACING YOUR OWN ANGER (10 minutes for each activity)**

Not only do we need to talk to students about speaking up for themselves and others when bullying and harassment occurs, but we also need to help students manage their own anger and desire to lash out at others. There are many ways to address one's own anger, but here are two ways to self-monitor so that internal feelings don't get acted out inappropriately.

### **WHAT'S MY PART?**

Ask students to think of the last time they had a conflict with someone. Have students get into pairs; each student should share his or her story for 1 minute. Then each student should take 1 minute to list ways in which he/she might have been part of the problem in the conflict. Students should be as imaginative as possible. If they get stuck, their partner might make suggestions. Once each person has told the story and imagined his/her part, have a few students share their stories and learnings with the group.

### **PERHAPS . . .**

Again, ask students to think of a time someone really made them mad. Have them get into pairs (different ones if they did the activity above) and tell their stories for a minute each. Then have each student think about alternative reasons for the person's behavior; they should be as creative as possible. If they get stuck, their partner can make suggestions.

You might need to provide examples for this, such as: Another driver cut me off on the way to school today—we almost had an accident! I was furious and frightened! Perhaps . . .the driver got a call from the emergency room. Perhaps . . . the driver didn't even see me. Perhaps . . . the driver was late to work and in danger of getting fired. Perhaps . . . and so on.

Once each person has told the story and imagined his/her part, have a few students share their stories and learnings with the group. If there is time, lead one of the students in imagining how the other person in the conflict might have been feeling, might have been as angry as them, and so on.



The mini-lessons provided above are flexible. Consider creating some scenarios that relate to your own school setting and community. Try to encourage laughter; it will help students deal with a difficult issue. Humor has a way of encouraging further engagement and learning.

For more ideas about how to use these lessons, check out the list of recommended web sites at the end of the longer RaceBridges Resource on bullying, *Finding New Words: A Resource for Addressing Bullying at School* ([http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/finding\\_new\\_words.html](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/finding_new_words.html)).

***KEEP THE PEACE—EVERY DAY!***



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## LESSON EXTENSIONS

- Expand the lesson: Most of these lessons can be expanded on their own or combined with others for a complete class period. Many are appropriate for role-playing so that students can see a situation, “freeze” it, analyze it, and re-enact it in different ways to get different results.
- Use a longer lesson plan from the [www.racebridgesforschools.com](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com) site that deals with the issues raised here.
  - For issues related to community building, use
    - Claim It!: Differences and Similarities, Creating a Climate of Inclusion  
[http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/claim\\_it.html](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/claim_it.html)
    - Sticking Together: Sharing Our Stories, Our Differences, and Our Similarities  
[http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/sticking\\_together.html](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/sticking_together.html)
    - Storytelling: A Toolkit for Bridging Differences and Building Community.  
<http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/storytelling.html>
  - For issues related to creating an inclusive, welcoming community, use
    - Including Everyone: Small Changes to Create a Welcoming Classroom  
[http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/including\\_everyone.html](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/including_everyone.html)
    - Seeking Harmony: Starting and Sustaining a Harmony Club for High School Students  
[http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/diversity\\_club\\_faculty.html](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/diversity_club_faculty.html)
    - Finding New Words: A Resource for Addressing Bullying at School  
[http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/finding\\_new\\_words.html](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/finding_new_words.html)





- For issues related to ethnic and racial differences, use one of our lesson plans based on a real story:
  - Dreaming of Cuba: Stories that Bind  
<http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/antonio/antonio.html>
  - Feathers in the Wind: A Jewish-American's Story  
<http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/sstone/index.html>
  - Connecting the Dots: Racism, Activism, and Creating a Life  
[http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/michaelmc\\_tracks/index.html](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/michaelmc_tracks/index.html)
  - The Spirit Survives: the American Indian Boarding School Experience: Then and Now  
[http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/dovie\\_tracks/dovie.html](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/dovie_tracks/dovie.html)
  - Hidden Memories: Japanese-American Internment  
[http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/anne\\_tracks/internment2.html](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/anne_tracks/internment2.html)
  - From Flint Michigan to Your Front Door: Tracing the Roots of Racism  
[http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/laron\\_tracks/laron\\_index.htm](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/laron_tracks/laron_index.htm)
  - Being Mexican American: Caught Between Two Worlds—Nepantla  
[http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/olga\\_tracks/nepantla.html](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/olga_tracks/nepantla.html)

