## Supporting Every Student Learning Series

CONVERSATION GUIDE

# The Effects of Bullying on Children

**Part 4. Reducing Bullying in School Environments**

*(with Dr. Tracy Vaillancourt, University of Ottawa)*

## A positive classroom environment and nurturing school climate can reduce or prevent bullying behaviour.

**Key understandings**

* School climate refers to the collective beliefs, values and attitudes that are present in the learning environment.
* School climate also encompasses:
  + psychological and physical safety (e.g., clear and consistent expectations, attitudes about bullying behavior)
  + teaching and learning (e.g., quality of instruction, extent to which social-emotional and academic learning is valued, whether professional development is systematic and ongoing)
  + relationships (e.g., respect for diversity, sense of connectedness among members of the school community)
  + physical environment (e.g., cleanliness, order and adequate resources).
* Studies show that a positive school climate is linked to an increase in academic achievement and mental health, and a decrease in bullying behaviour.
* Research indicates that the type of discipline in a school can affect the prevalence of bullying behavior, particularly when contrasting an *authoritarian* approach (“Because I say so”) with the more democratic *authoritative* approach (“Let’s figure this out together”).
* School environments that emphasize communication, responsiveness, nurturing and a democratic approach to problem-solving (i.e., an *authoritative* approach) create high expectations and high supports that significantly reduce the prevalence of bullying behavior.

# Questions for reflection and discussion

* What strategies can schools use to monitor and assess school climate? How could this data be used?
* How can schools build their capacity to provide higher level of expectations and high degrees of support within the learning environment? What evidence would indicate these enhanced expectations and supports are in place and making a positive difference for students?
* What next steps do we need to take to create more positive learning environments for all students?
* How are the understandings from this series reflected in our school’s policies and practices?

# For more information

* Safe and Caring

<https://education.alberta.ca/safe-and-caring-schools/overview/>

* *Creating Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environments: The Walk Around: A School Leader’s Observation Guide*

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/142736/the-walk-around_school-leader.pdf>

https://education.alberta.ca/media/142742/the-walk-around\_teacher.pdf