Supporting Every Student Learning Series

CONVERSATION GUIDE

Social-Emotional Learning and Bullying Behaviour
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Social-emotional learning can reduce bullying behaviour, which in turn can contribute to the creation of welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments.

Key understandings:

- CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) defines social – emotional learning as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to:
    - understand and manage emotions,
    - set and achieve positive goals,
    - feel and show empathy for others,
    - establish and maintain positive relationships, and
    - make responsible decisions.
- Five inter-related competencies that make up social-emotional learning, include:
    - Self-awareness—the ability to recognize emotions and thoughts.
    - Self-management—the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts and behaviour in different settings, including impulse control and setting goals.
    - Social awareness—the ability to take the perspective of others, to show empathy, and to respect diversity.
    - Relationship skills—the ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships, built on clear communication, active listening, cooperation, negotiating conflict, and the ability to seek and offer help.
    - Responsible decision-making—the ability to make constructive and respectful decisions, including weighing alternatives and thinking through consequences.
- Characteristics of welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments include:
    - feeling safe,
    - learning the importance of caring for others,
    - being treated fairly,
    - fostering healthy and respectful relationships,
    - promoting positive mental health,
    - respecting, celebrating and understanding diversity as a strength.
- Social-emotional skills provide a foundation for a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.

Key understandings (cont.):

- Bullying behaviour in the learning environment:
  - compromises students' feeling of safety,
  - undermines healthy relationships,
  - negatively impacts mental health,
  - violates students' rights,
  - undermines efforts to respect diversity.
- Students are more likely to bully others if they lack self-control or emotion regulation skills; gaining self-awareness and self-management skills reduces bullying behaviour
- Empathy is foundational for developing socially-responsible behaviour. Students who are empathetic are more likely to stand up for someone who is experiencing bullying behaviour.
- Relationship skills contribute to students' ability to make and sustain friendships; high-quality friendships help protect individuals from bullying behaviour.
- Relationship skills also enhance the ability of students to intervene actively or seek out an adult when they witness bullying behaviour.
- Responsible decision-making fosters students' ability to think through and solve problems, including how to shut down or avoid bullying behaviour.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- What strategies could be used to assess the current social-emotional competencies of students in your school?
- What are some of the untapped opportunities throughout the school day that could be used to promote social-emotional learning?
- What school-wide approaches are currently being implemented in your school that could be leveraged to support social-emotional learning?

For more information:

- Alberta Government information on social-emotional learning, including a video, related conversation guide, and a fact sheet to help choose resources and links for further information.