Bullying Prevention and Intervention for Students with Special Needs

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Agenda

Definitions

Prevalence of Bullying Involvement of Students

Unpacking bias based bullying of students with special needs

• vulnerabilities

• Developmental Intergroup Approach

• Stigma, Labeling, Openness

• Attribution Theory

Prevention

Intervention
"Any unwanted aggressive behaviour(s) by another youth or group of youths, involving an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm."
BULLYING IS A RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM

...when power and aggression are combined.
Bias-Based Bullying

When someone is bullied because they belong to a particular group (defined by: race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or appearance)

Typically, bias-based bullying is perpetrated by a member of a social group with majority status toward a member of a social group with minority status
Students with Special Needs

- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Learning Disabilities
- Intellectual Disability
- Vision, Hearing, Mobility Impairments
- Behaviour Disorders
- Health Conditions and Allergies
A 2019 study found that youth who experience bias-based bullying based on multiple social identities report more negative outcomes of bullying and higher levels of school avoidance and fear than those students who only report one type of bias-based bullying and those who experience non-bias-based bullying.
The promise of inclusive education

“While reviews comparing inclusive settings with separate special schools or classes have reported small positive [academic] benefits of inclusion, reviews comparing social outcomes within inclusive settings have found that pupils with special educational needs are generally less accepted and more rejected than their typically developing classmates.”

Humphrey et al, 2013
Robust Research Findings

• Low social acceptance, marginalization, peer rejection
• Increased risk: victimization, bullying, dual involvement
• School disengagement, discipline problems
• Truancy in secondary school
• Dropping out of education
• Delinquency in adolescence
• Enduring mental health problems
Vicious Cycle

- Poor Social Skills
- Peer Rejection
- Alone
- Bullying Involvement
- Withdrawn or Provocative Behaviour
Unpacking bias-based bullying of students with special needs

- Vulnerabilities of students with special needs
- Developmental Intergroup Approach
- Stigma and Labeling
- Attribution Theory
Relationship vulnerabilities students with special needs may present

Social Skills:

Face to Face Interaction
• eye contact and gaze
• Communicating with one’s face/voice/body
• detecting and interpreting other’s social cues through their face/voice/body

Verbal Skills
• Receptive - understanding nuance, sarcasm, teasing, humour
• Expressive – volume, rate, frequency, clarity, fluidity
• Conversation – ability to have a mutual back and forth in which each partner builds on what the other said
• Assertive Communication – refusal and self-assertion without aggression
Social Skills:

Social Cognition
- Perspective taking – inferring other’s beliefs, intentions, and emotions
- Willingness to coordinate one’s own agenda with another’s
- Understanding fair and unfair
- Understanding the effect of one’s own behaviours on others
- Understanding when one is being taken advantage of
- Ability to negotiate and compromise
Relationship vulnerabilities

Social Behaviours
- Joint Attention
- Making overtures
- Responding to overtures
- Sharing
- Self-regulation of level of arousal/ emotion/behaviour/attention
- Expected social conventional behaviours, greeting, leaving, thanking, etc.
- Help seeking behaviours
- Friendship overtures: validating, complimenting, inviting
Developmental Intergroup Approach (Palmer et al, 2018)

Intergroup Processes:
- Group Membership
- Group Identification (+ or -)
- Group Norms
- Social Moral Reasoning
Early Childhood

- Like Me/Not Like Me
- Affiliate with Ingroup
- Differentiate from Outgroup
- Understand “unfair, wrong, hurtful”
- Very open to socialization re Inclusivity & prosocial behaviour

Later Childhood

- Preference for ingroup attitudes and behaviour
- Perspective taking skills and moral reasoning develop

Preteen and Adolescent

- Evaluate self and other based on conforming vs. deviating from group norms
- Fear social repercussions of violating group norms
Early Childhood

- Most likely to empathize and defend bullied peers
- Most likely to be inclusive because it is the “right” thing to do - i.e. bullying is hurtful and defending is valued by adults
- Broad Generic Norms prevail

Middle Childhood

- Less likely to defend outgroup bullied peers, less inclusive
- Moral reasoning co-exists with emerging Ingroup Specific Norms

Preteen and Adolescent

- Least likely to defend bullied peers, most exclusive
- Ingroup Specific Norms trump Moral Reasoning
- Dismissive Justify Stereotype
Stigma and Labeling

Medical disease model renders practice of “diagnosis”

- Means you have a disease – not a difference or a variation
- Connotes a negative, undesirable state that is “less than” normal
- Connotes need for confidentiality to not talk about it openly

This creates

- Shame for the person who carries the diagnosis
- Altered expectations about the person on the part of others
Labeling vs. Openness about Students with Special Needs

- Reluctance to "label" students (and use of euphemisms)
- Fear that labels lower expectations and prejudice relationships
- Reflects societal value about normalcy and success (deep bias)
- Peers notice but silence perpetuates stigma and shame
Special needs are seen as a manifestations of human neurodevelopmental diversity – the inevitable variations that are part of being human.

Openness enables more inclusive and respectful policies and practices in schools.

Research evidence shows higher peer acceptance occurs when a students’ learning differences and special needs are explained to peers in advance.
Attribution Theory

Befriend classmate with special needs

• Is the disability clearly apparent?
• Does the person have control over disruptive behaviours

Attribution: Not their fault
Response: sympathetic benevolent, caretaking reactions

Exclude / bully classmate with special needs

• Is the disability invisible?
• Does the person not try hard enough, choose to be disruptive?

Attribution: Responsibility
Response: anger and rejection
PREVENTION
Goals of Whole School Approach

Promote positive relationships among all stakeholders

Education and awareness activities throughout school year

Develop and maintain attitudes of respect and inclusion

Shared understanding of bullying issues at school

Bullying Prevention policies, strategies and resources

Positive, inclusive, and equitable social climate

Enduring respectful, inclusive attitudes and behaviours
Initiatives at Every Level

- Students
- Community
- Staff
- Guardians

Inclusive, Equitable Social Climate
Effective Inclusive Education

1. Inform classmates about students with special needs – work with students to describe and explain.

2) Teach social justice using multiple media to stimulate pride in all multiple identities, inclusive group norms, and motivation to be allies.

3) Support social interactions through a range of strategies such as setting up joint activities or buddy systems.
Advocate

For social emotional learning resources and opportunities for students with special needs to address social skill deficits

For Speech and Language, Behaviour Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Mental Health Support, and other necessary supports

For additional supervision
7 Strategies to promote positive relationships for students with Special Needs

1. Be a Role Model
2. Observe
3. Reflect
4. Respond in the Moment
5. Scaffold / Coach
6. Use Social Architecture
7. Champion
1. Role Model

Demonstrate:
- Respect
- Warmth
- Empathy
- Patience
- Cooperation
- Sharing
- Validating
- Complimenting
2. Observe
3. Reflect

- Your reactions to individual students
- Your fairness
- How students see you
- Your biases
4. Respond in the Moment

Consistently Call Out:
- Disrespectful language
- Hurtful behaviours e.g., groaning, eye rolling, hair tossing, put-downs, etc.

Praise and Validate:
- Openness & Inclusion
- Helpfulness
- Supportiveness
5. Coach / Scaffold

Teacher provides support for students to function at a higher level

- Break down social-emotional skills
- Be present for ongoing monitoring and feedback
Skills to Model and Scaffold for all Students

- Regulating emotion
- Regulating behaviour
- Empathy and perspective taking
- Sense of fair play and justice
- Appreciation of differences/diversity
- Appreciation of rights and responsibilities
- Using one’s power positively
- Positive problem solving
- Moral (re)engagement
6. Social Architecture

- Teacher-assigned seating plans, groups, teams, partners etc.
- Structured activities/clubs/mentoring
- Reshuffle often
- Decide *if, when, & where* student-initiated groupings happen

- Every student feels safe, included & accepted
- Healthy relationships, not necessarily friendships
- Protects vulnerable students
- Separates students who negatively influence each other
7. Champion

- Every student needs to shine in the eyes of their peers
- Find multiple avenues for recognition beyond the traditional

E.g., kindness, great listener, exuberance, marching to the beat of one’s own drum, thinking out of the box, etc.
Intervention
ASSESSMENT

HOW OFTEN? Frequency

HOW LONG? History

WHERE? Other relationships? Pervasiveness

WHAT IS THE IMPACT? Severity

Bias?
SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHO BULLY:

Students who bully may need scaffolding for:

✓ Social and Communication Skills
✓ Self-Regulation
✓ Inhibition of Impulses
✓ Social Problem Solving
✓ Empathy and Perspective-Taking
✓ Attitudes and Moral Understanding
✓ Ability to differentiate playful teasing from bullying
DEVELOPING FORMATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR STUDENTS WHO BULLY

Indigenous teaching – children learn by making mistakes.

Honour these mistakes and provide opportunities for learning.

Formative consequences help students learn from their mistakes and develop new knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Provide a clear message that bullying is unacceptable and create opportunities to learn healthy relationship skills.

Student(s) who have bullied need to know that you will be regularly following up with the student who was victimized.
SCAFFOLDING FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE VICTIMIZED

Rights

• Emphasize their right to be treated with respect

Safety

• Thank student for seeking help
• Use reflective listening
• Reduce shame
• Listen non-judgmentally and empathize
• Be positive and indicate your commitment to help
Assess situation and determine level of risk.

Ensure safety at school, back and forth from home to school, and online.

Pair with others (adults and peers) so as not to be alone at vulnerable times.

Coordinate with parents, others, but respect student's autonomy.
SAFETY MONITORING TO ENSURE BULLYING STOPS

Set up regular follow-up meetings with those involved.

- daily for 1\textsuperscript{st} week
- 2\textsuperscript{nd} week 2-3X
- 3\textsuperscript{rd} week and beyond: 1X until resolved for several weeks

In meetings, ask:

- Incidents of bullying?
- Problems because of reporting?
SUPPORTING VICTIMIZED STUDENTS:

Students who are bullied may need scaffolding for:

✓ Understanding their right to be treated with respect
✓ Making and keeping Friends
✓ Assertive Communication Skills
✓ Emotional and Behavioural Control
✓ Competence and self-esteem
✓ Entering and engaging in new social opportunities
✓ Help Seeking
✓ Advocacy
Celebrate all the ways of being human!

Thank You!
Web Resources

• GLSEN’s Resources for Educators
• HRC Foundation’s Welcoming Schools
• ADL’s Resource Knowledge Base
• www.tolerance.org
• www.ensemble-rd.com (Ensemble for Respect of Diversity)
References 1


References 2


References 3

