



Imagine Newsletter

A School Climate Approach to Bullying Prevention

Information for Parents

Issue # 13

INCLUSION! What is it?

Surveys of students, school staff and parents tell us that one out of every five students in Canadian elementary schools is being bullied every week. This means that many of our children do not feel safe at school. Children who do not feel safe find it hard to focus on learning.

We know that bullying is a learned behaviour and that it can be "un-learned". We need to give all students many chances to learn how to "get along". This will help them use their power to be good friends rather than using it to hurt people, as in bullying.

If a child is "different" either by skin colour, body weight, ability, or behaviour, he or she is often teased, joked about or excluded in lots of different situations. In other words, he or she is bullied.

We can begin to prevent bullying if we teach children about accepting differences in themselves and others. They also need to learn **how to include people** who are "different" into their activities. This is called **INCLUSION**.

Here's how parents can help teach **INCLUSION**:

Be a good role model:

We can show children how to be kind, polite and friendly with everyone. We can encourage our children to play with a variety of children, watching their play and helping them learn how to be patient, take turns and respect differences.



Teach children social skills:

We can practice with our children what they can say in different situations and with different people so that their words are respectful and welcoming, even in situations of conflict.



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Watch for good behaviour:



You can give praise when you see children:

- give a compliment
- include others in their play
- share with others
- try to meet another's needs.



Children love praise and will work hard to get it. Remember, children learn by doing and from failures and successes. They can't get it right all the time!

We need to be realistic about our expectations of children's behaviour, so remember:

- Inclusion DOES NOT mean that we always agree and like each other. We do not like everyone all of the time. Differences of opinion and personality do exist, but it is possible to always show respect for others, even if we do not like them.
- Inclusion DOES NOT mean that we must make everyone happy all the time. Children may not feel happy when they have to wait for something, to take turns, to take time out because of how they act, or to stay behind until they learn how to play a game or a sport. In those situations, they are not being excluded, because there is a plan for them to be included later on.
- Inclusion IS NOT THE SAME as friendship. Friendship involves liking someone. You do not have to like someone to show respect and include them.

"If we continue to show children how to be good citizens of our school communities, then everyone will find the way to get along and live peacefully with one another."

(Shafik Asante. (Jan 2008). What is Inclusion. Available: Inclusion Network-www.inclusion.com)

