No Place for Hate® Activity Library
Centering Youth Voices: Addressing Identity-Based Bullying

Lesson Plan, Activity and Overview

Video: Centering Youth Voices: Addressing Identity Based Bullying

Bullying takes place in schools every day and is one of the primary ways that bias shows up among students. When the bullying behavior targets aspects of someone's identity, this is called identity-based bullying. Identity-based bullying is bullying based on bias about or targeting of someone's identity (e.g., appearance, race, culture, gender and gender identity, language, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, etc.). Because identity-based bullying targets who the student is—a core part of their identity—it can be especially harmful. Identity-based bullying impacts not only the targeted student, but others around them who identify in the same way and who worry that they may be the next target.

Grade Level

Grades 6-12

Learning Objectives

• Students will reflect on their own identities and the identities of others.
• Students will understand what identity-based bullying is and explore examples based on young people's real-life experiences.
• Students will identify ways that their school can address and reduce identity-based bullying.

Materials Needed

• Video: Centering Youth Voices: Addressing Identity Based Bullying
• 6 Ways to Be an Ally (English)
• 6 Ways to Be an Ally (Spanish)

Words You Might Use

Bias: An inclination or preference, either for or against an individual or group, that interferes with impartial judgment.

Bullying: Repeated actions or threats of action directed toward a person by one or more people who have (or are perceived to have) more power or status than their target in order to cause fear, distress or harm.

Identity: The qualities and beliefs that make a particular person or group different from others.

Identity-Based Bullying: Refers to any form of bullying related to the characteristics considered unique to a person's identity, such as their race, religion, sexual orientation or physical appearance.

Core Activity

First, engage students in a discussion about identity. Ask students: What does the word "identity" mean? Define identity as "the qualities and beliefs that make a particular person or group different from others." Share an example using yourself (e.g., "My identity includes being Latina, a woman and Catholic.") Explain that many things shape a person's identity and who they are. Ask students to share different parts of their identity by recording on 4-5 sticky notes different aspects of their identity and then display them on the board or a wall. (Alternatively, have students share their identity words out loud and record them on a semantic web.) Give all students the opportunity to look at the board. Then discuss what they see by asking:

- What do you notice about the words and phrases you see? What do you wonder?
- Are there words that you had not thought of as being part of identity?
- What aspects of identity are included here? What aspects of identity are not included here?
- Which of these aspects of identity are most important to you?
- What happens when an aspect of your identity becomes the target of bias or bullying?
- How does identity-based bullying affect the target? How does it affect the school community?

Next, watch and discuss the video. Explain that this video features five young people between the ages of 12 and 18 who discuss their experiences with bias, bullying and identity-based bullying in school. You may choose to watch the whole video before engaging in discussion or instead, stop at certain points in the video, asking questions to check understanding and expand/deepen students'

thinking. When the video is over, engage students in a discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:

- What thoughts and feelings came to mind as you watched the video?

- What did you notice? What did you wonder?

- What are examples of the bullying, bias or identity-based bullying that the students faced? How did it impact them?

- What does Julia mean when she says her school is "incredibly racially, ethnically, religiously homogenous?" How would you describe our school in terms of its diversity? How do you think the diversity (or lack of diversity) impacts students and our school community as a whole?

- In what ways did their teachers or schools support them? In what ways did their teachers or schools not support them?

- Ve'ondre says she started doing advocacy on social media because there's a lack of education in schools about queer people and queer history. Is that true for your school and what do you think should be done about that?

- What are some of the changes students in the video are asking for their schools to make?

- Whose story resonated with you? How so?

- How does bias, bullying and identity-based bullying impact these students?

- How does bias, bullying and identity-biased bullying impact students at our school?

- When Chloe says that oftentimes schools will deal with individual incidents but not "the system as a whole," what does she mean by this?

- What does it mean to be "proactive" when dealing with bias? What are some proactive examples or ideas shared in the video? What examples of addressing identity-based bullying proactively have you seen or experienced at our school?

- What did the young people say are the root causes of identity-based bullying?

- Do you think a lot of these issues can be resolved by "having a conversation," as one of the students says in the video?

- What was your biggest takeaway from watching the video?

- What was the most memorable, impactful or important phrase, statement, story or experience? What impact did that have on you?

- What do the young people in the video want educators and schools to do to address the identity-based bullying that is happening to them and others around them?

Third, following the last discussion question about what the young people in the video want their teachers and schools to do, ask students: *What do you need from teachers, school staff and the school administration so that bias and bullying is reduced and the school climate is safe, inclusive and respectful for all?* Invite students to share their ideas, recording their responses where they can be saved. After brainstorming, divide students into groups based on the categories below. (You can divide them into groups either within their classes or divide them as a whole school into specific teams.) Have students work in the following small groups (adding other groups if you feel some categories are missing). For each of the groups, have students identify (1) what the problem or issue is, (2) how the problem shows up in their school, which could include conducting a survey (see below), and (3) some possible solutions to their issue or problem based on the categories below.

- Individual acts of bullying and bias between students

- Curricular content

- Student groups or clubs

- Bias-based school incidents

- School rules and policies

- Bias and bullying in the classroom

If you have time to extend this activity, engage students in working on an action plan to begin addressing the issues in their respective categories (see below).

Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further

NOTE: These additional activities can be done as follow-ups to the core activity and they can also serve as an additional NPFH activity if the core activity is completed first.

- Based on the action ideas identified in the Core Activity above, after students work in small groups to explore solutions in their specific category, have students work on an action plan to bring their ideas to fruition. The action plan should include the following: (1) a statement with the overall goal, (2) what success looks like (i.e., expected or desired outcomes), (3) tasks needed to reach the goal, (4) who is responsible and who needs to be involved, (5) timeline and workplan. For each group, assign an adult liaison (school staff, parent/family member) and have students meet regularly to plan their project(s), which could take weeks or months. Before launching into the action plan, have each group present their recommendations and plan to the school's administration or the NPFH Committee.

- Engage a small group of students and staff (or your school's NPFH Committee) to work together to create a survey for all students to assess the extent to which identity-based bullying is an issue at your school. The survey can include questions about bullying and cyberbullying and also ask specific questions about the participants' identity and whether they or others in their identity groups have been targeted based on that identity group. The results can then be compiled and shared with the students and staff and be incorporated with recommendations for addressing identity-based bullying.

- Invite students to explore what it means to act as an ally in situations where bullying and bias take place. Start by defining ally, eliciting a definition such as "Someone who speaks out on behalf of or takes actions that are supportive of someone who is targeted by bias or bullying, either themselves or someone else." You can then refer back to the video and ask, "In what ways could a friend, peer or classmate have acted as an ally to _____?" (insert the names of different students from the video) and then brainstorm different ideas. Then go over the 6 Ways to Be an Ally handout together and based on those ideas, have students turn and talk with someone nearby and share a time they either acted as an ally to someone, or someone acted as an ally to them. Then engage the whole class or group in a discussion, having students share some examples and referring back to the handout. Emphasize with students that ally behavior is only one of the many ways that schools can address and reduce identity-based bullying.

NOTE: For all of these activities, make sure students do not use names of specific people or scenarios that reflect a real-life situation of bullying that could potentially hurt, harm or highlight a person at their school. While it's helpful to use real-life situations as inspiration for stories, it is important that those scenarios do not disclose names, people or situations that are too close to home.

Home Connection

Share ADL's Table Talk What Bullying Is and Is Not with families.

How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

Students will reflect on their own identities, engage in discussions about bullying and identity-based bullying and explore what they can do as a school to address and reduce identity-based bullying. This will contribute to a classroom and school climate that is safe, inclusive and equitable.