

Belonging Brainstorm

Teaching and learning activity for students in Years 7 to 12

OVERVIEW

This resource provides a teaching guide for the Years 7 to 12 teaching and learning activity, delivered as part of the 2024 Bullying No Way: National week of action.

This activity highlights the importance of a sense of belonging to support student social and emotional wellbeing and the prevention of bullying.

LEARNING INTENTION

Students will consider and analyse what belonging means to them.

Students will evaluate the impact that valuing diversity and difference can have on influencing a sense of belonging and identify related actions to contribute to bullying prevention.

RESOURCES

- A3 or butcher's paper with activity questions pre-written on them
- Marker pens
- Timer

LEARNING SEQUENCE (30 – 40 mins)

- 1 Introduction (2 mins)
- 2 Facilitate class discussion (10 mins)
- 3 Class activity (10-15 mins)
- 4 Review (5 mins)

CURRICULUM LINKS

Australian Curriculum (Version 8.4)

Years 7 and 8 Health and Physical Education Content Descriptions

Interacting with others:

- Investigate the benefits of relationships and examine their impact on their own and others' health and wellbeing (ACPPS074)
- Investigate the benefits to individuals and communities of valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity (ACPPS079)

Years 9 and 10 Health and Physical Education Content Descriptions

Interacting with others:

- Investigate how empathy and ethical decision making contribute to respectful relationships (ACPPS093)
- Critique behaviours and contextual factors that influence health and wellbeing of diverse communities (ACPPS098)

Australian Curriculum (Version 9)

Years 7 and 8 Health and Physical Education Content Descriptions

Interacting with others:

- Examine the roles of respect, empathy, power and coercion in developing respectful relationships (AC9HP8P04)
- Investigate strategies that influence how communities value diversity and propose actions they can take to promote inclusion in their communities (AC9HP8P05)

Years 9 and 10 Health and Physical Education Content Descriptions

Interacting with others:

- Evaluate the influence of respect, empathy, power and coercion on establishing and maintaining respectful relationships (AC9HP10P04)
- Propose strategies and actions individuals and groups can implement to challenge biases, stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination, and promote inclusion in their communities (AC9HP10P05)

IMPORTANT NOTE

This teaching and learning activity provides an opportunity for students to focus on the concept of belonging.

Understanding how a sense of belonging makes students feel more connected is a powerful protection against bullying.

Belonging means students can embrace who they are, respect everyone's differences, build resilience and stand up together against unkindness.

Bullying is a complex, multifaceted issue that can be different in each school and year level. The appropriate way to respond will differ for each situation and every student.

Teachers may need to scaffold student responses about bullying to ensure they are appropriate.

When discussing bullying, it is recommended that teachers ensure:

- Students are aware that this activity is a general discussion and that students can raise any concerns they may have (e.g. about bullying) with you after the lesson.
- There is currently no obvious or immediate bullying issue. If there is, this may not be the right time for class discussion. In some cases, it may be better to delay this discussion until the problem is addressed.
- Students know classroom rules for talking and contributing ideas – remind students that bullying is a sensitive topic, and it is important to use respectful listening.
- They avoid using class role-play related to this topic as it can cause distress to some students.
- They know how to use protective interrupting (acknowledge they have heard the student but stop them from divulging further details) if a student begins to reveal inappropriate personal information about themselves or other students. Refer to your school policies and procedures for advice about responding to disclosures.
- Any students who become distressed should be referred for support to a guidance officer or other appropriate staff member and parents or carers are notified.

SCHOOL BELONGING

The Australian Education Research Organisation (2023) describes a student's sense of belonging at school as the extent to which a student feels part of their school and valued and cared for by their school community.

When a student feels valued, accepted and that they belong to their environment, there are flow-on benefits that support their learning and engagement.

Positive relationships with peers and the school community can enhance the development of students' cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement.

Positive school climates that value diversity and inclusion can foster a sense of belonging and provide a protective factor against negative peer relationships and reduce bullying.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

[Bullying No Way](#) – Supporting school communities with evidence-informed resources and activities for a proactive approach to bullying education and prevention.

[Australian Education Research Organisation](#) – Encouraging a sense of belonging and connectedness in secondary schools.

[Be You](#) – Supporting educators to develop a positive, inclusive and resilient learning community.

[Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

Learning Activity

INTRODUCTION (2 mins)

Teacher reads statement below:

This week is Bullying No Way Week and the theme is Everyone belongs. Belonging means everyone has a place in our class and in our school. Belonging is a sense of being accepted, valued and encouraged by others, and feeling included in the life and activities of the school. Belonging at school involves connections with other students and with teachers and school staff.

Research tells us that when a student feels valued, accepted and that they belong to their school environment, there are flow-on benefits that support learning and engagement. This can mean reduced days away from school, higher effort and motivation in school work, and being more likely to be concerned about others and help them.

Belonging keeps us connected and is a powerful protection against bullying.

At the end of the lesson you will be able to say what belonging means to you and commit to an action you can do to promote a sense of belonging.

CLASS DISCUSSION (10 mins)

Teacher reads the statement below:

In Australia, almost 1 in 3 students report they have been bullied (Green et al, 2024). The majority of bullying presents as negative interactions around a range of issues. These issues may include physical appearance, personal differences, race, sexuality, the different ways our brains work, family backgrounds and friendship breakdowns.

Wanting to fit in and be accepted at school is the desire of most students. Feeling like we don't belong can seriously impact our attendance, our achievements and our emotional wellbeing.

By promoting acceptance and embracing diversity we can create an environment where everyone feels valued, respected and supported – ultimately reducing incidents of bullying and creating a sense of belonging for all students.

Teacher invites students to discuss the following questions (and can choose to provide examples to support the discussion):

- Where are some places you feel like you belong?
- How do we know we belong somewhere?
- When you belong, how does that make you feel?
- Why is it important to belong?
- Do we know we belong straight away, or does it take time? Can you think of some examples?
- Who decides who belongs?
- What could you say or do to help others feel they belong?

Teacher reminds students:

Everyone is different and that's a good thing. Everyone belongs in our school and in our classes. When we belong, it keeps us connected. When we are connected, we have a powerful protection against bullying.

ACTIVITY (15 mins) & REVIEW (5 mins)

BELONGING BRAINSTORM

[Before the session, create posters by writing one question (below) per sheet of A3/butcher's paper and place around the classroom. If the student group is large, posters can be duplicated.]

Q1: Think about a time when you felt a sense of belonging in a group. How did you know you belonged?

Q2: Think about a time when you struggled to feel you belonged in a group. Why do you believe you felt this way?

Q3: Think about a time you witnessed someone struggle to feel they belonged in a group. What happened to make them feel included?

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Divide students into 3 (or 6) groups. Number the groups 1/1a, 2/2a and 3/3a.
- 2 Direct students' attention to the posters around the room. Read the question on each sheet out loud.
- 3 Ask each group to move to the poster matching their group number.
- 4 Have students use markers to write on the poster all the answers they can think of (as individuals and as a group).
- 5 After 5 minutes, have the groups rotate to the next poster – consider and discuss the question, review the responses and add any other thoughts or ideas.
- 6 After 3 minutes, rotate the groups once again to review, discuss and add comments.
- 7 After another 3 minutes, rotate for a final time (so each group returns to their original poster).
- 8 Students read the poster's contents out loud to the whole class.
- 9 Reflecting on the responses (particularly to Qs 1 and 3), ask each student to make a personal commitment to an action they can do to promote a sense of belonging at school. They could write this in their student diary.

DIFFERENTIATION

- If students are unable to participate, provide them with a task to support the group activity, such as timing the rotations and/or counting votes.
- Rather than asking for students to share personal stories, the teacher could make up scenarios to prompt discussion about belonging.

REFERENCE

Green, D. M., Taddeo, C., Tippet, N., Spears, B. A., Di Censo, G., Donnarumma, L., Jebiril, W. & Bishop, C. L. (2024). *A review of Australian Literature (2014-2023) on student bullying*. Prepared for the Australian Schools Anti-Bullying Collective. Queensland Department of Education. bullyingnoway.gov.au