

Module 5: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and creative methods for bullying prevention

Objective:

- Incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) and creative educational methods to engage students in bullying prevention.

Summary of content:

- SEL-based lesson plans for teaching empathy, communication skills, and emotional intelligence.
- SEL-based conflict resolution strategies.
- SEL lesson plans and activities designed to develop positive peer relationships and reduce aggressive behaviour. Practice reverse role-playing to foster empathy between students. Conduct trust-building activities in classrooms, such as team-building games.
- Using creative drama: Role-playing scenarios to foster empathy and problem-solving.
- Using bibliotherapy: literature and reading-based activities to encourage reflection on bullying themes.

Lesson 1. SEL-based lesson plans

Recent studies in educational psychology emphasize the importance of implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in schools as an essential measure for bullying prevention (Nickerson et al., 2019). Rather than seeing SEL as a practice limited to certain age groups, emerging research highlights its vital role in school interventions to prevent violence (Gaffney et al., 2019). SEL focuses on developing social interaction skills to reduce students' exposure to bullying, support the formation of friendships and peer connections, and thereby lessen the long-term negative impacts of bullying (Smith & Low, 2013). Below, you can find some examples of lesson plans for teaching SEL skills.

Building empathy – lesson plan example

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Understand the concept of empathy and its role in fostering positive relationships.
- Practice perspective-taking to recognize and respect others' emotions and viewpoints.
- Develop collaborative problem-solving skills that incorporate empathetic communication.

Materials needed

- Projector or whiteboard for visuals.
- "Empathy Map" templates (one per group) – see **Annex 5**.
- Scenario cards featuring real-life conflict situations (one scenario per group).
- Markers and sticky notes.
- Handout on “I” statements and active listening techniques.

Lesson structure:

Warm-up activity: “feel the same way” (10 Minutes)

Introduce students to the concept of shared emotions and experiences.

Begin by asking students to stand in a circle. The teacher reads out statements like, “Raise your hand if you’ve ever felt left out,” or “Raise your hand if you’ve ever helped someone who was upset.” As students participate, emphasize the shared experiences, helping them recognize common feelings.

Debrief questions:

- “What did you notice about the responses?”
- “How do shared experiences help us connect with one another?”

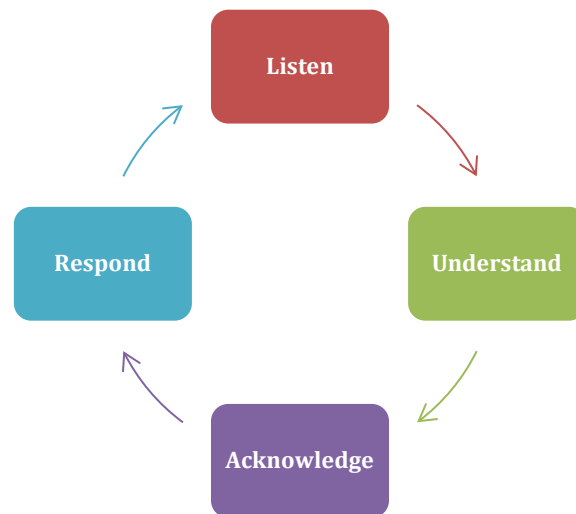
Understanding empathy: brief presentation (10 Minutes)

Define empathy and discuss its importance. Explain the two components of empathy:

- Cognitive empathy: Understanding another person’s perspective.
- Emotional empathy: Feeling another person’s emotions.

Discuss how empathy fosters trust, reduces conflict, and builds stronger relationships.

Visual aid: Use a simple infographic showing the steps to empathetic communication: Listen → Understand → Acknowledge → Respond.



Main activity: perspective-taking with scenarios (20 minutes)

Help students practice stepping into others' shoes. Divide students into small groups of 4-5. Provide each group with an Empathy Map template and a scenario card (e.g., a student feels excluded from a group project, or a disagreement arises over social media posts).

Groups complete the Empathy Map for the key figures in their scenario:

What are they feeling?

What are they thinking?

What are they saying?

What are they doing?

Debrief questions:

- "What did you learn about the characters' emotions and perspectives?"
- "How does understanding someone's perspective help us respond more effectively?"

Active Listening and "I" Statements (15 Minutes)

Teach students practical techniques for empathetic communication. Explain active listening (see previous module). Teach "I" statements.

Example: "I feel frustrated when I'm interrupted because it makes me feel unheard."

Practice: In pairs, students role-play scenarios from the earlier activity. One student expresses their feelings using "I" statements, while the other practices active listening.

Reflection and group discussion (10 Minutes)

Reflect on the importance of empathy and its application in daily life. Facilitate a whole-class discussion with questions like:

- "How did using empathy change the way you viewed the scenarios?"
- "What challenges did you face when practicing empathy or active listening?"
- "How can you use empathy to improve relationships in your daily life?"

Encourage students to share one specific action they'll take to practice empathy in the future.

Closing activity: empathy commitment wall (5 Minutes)

Provide each student with a sticky note. Ask them to write one way they plan to show empathy to someone this week. Have students place their sticky notes on a classroom "Empathy Wall" as a visual reminder.

SEL-based communication skills – lesson plan example

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Understand the role of empathetic and respectful communication in fostering positive relationships.
- Practice collaborative and inclusive communication strategies to build trust and reduce conflict.
- Apply these skills in real-life scenarios to promote understanding and teamwork.

Materials needed:

- Whiteboard or projector for visuals.
- Scenario cards for role-playing activities.
- Handouts on communication roadblocks and inclusive communication techniques.
- Sticky notes and markers.

Lesson structure:

1. Warm-up activity: “the miscommunication game” (10 minutes)

In pairs, one student describes a simple image (e.g., a shape or object) while the other tries to draw it based solely on the description. The describer cannot use specific names (e.g., “circle” or “square”) but must rely on general terms like “curve” or “straight line.”

Compare the drawing with the original image.

Debrief questions:

- “What made it challenging to communicate your instructions?”
- “How could clearer communication improve the results?”

2. Introduction: communication and empathy (10 minutes)

Discuss the importance of empathetic communication and the potential barriers. Empathetic communication is the ability to connect with others by understanding and sharing their feelings, thoughts, and perspectives. It goes beyond simply exchanging information—it involves actively listening, acknowledging emotions, and responding in ways that demonstrate understanding and respect. Empathy is at the heart of meaningful interactions and is critical for building trust, resolving conflicts, and fostering collaboration. Empathetic communication can be challenging to practice consistently. Several barriers may interfere with our ability to connect with others effectively:

- Prejudgments or stereotypes can prevent individuals from truly understanding another person’s perspective.
- When individuals are preoccupied with their own emotions or stress, they may struggle to focus on the feelings of others.

- In fast-paced environments, people may prioritize efficiency over emotional understanding, leading to rushed and surface-level communication.
- When individuals feel criticized or attacked, they may respond defensively, closing off the opportunity for empathetic dialogue.
- Interrupting, multitasking, or failing to pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues can obstruct the flow of empathetic communication.

Questions:

- “What barriers are familiar to you and in what context?”
- “What can we do to surpass them?”

3. *Collaborative communication techniques (15 minutes)*

Teach students strategies for inclusive and collaborative communication:

- Clarifying questions: Asking open-ended questions to ensure understanding (e.g., “Can you explain more about what you mean?”).
- Building on ideas: Acknowledging others’ contributions and expanding on them (e.g., “That’s an interesting point. What if we also...?”).
- Turn-taking: Ensuring everyone has a chance to speak in group discussions.
- Body language: Using positive nonverbal cues like nodding or maintaining eye contact to show engagement.

Activity: In small groups, students brainstorm how they can use these strategies in classroom settings, such as during group projects or discussions.

4. *Role-playing scenarios (20 minutes)*

Provide groups with scenario cards, such as:

- A group member isn’t contributing to a project.
- A disagreement arises over who should lead a class activity.
- A friend frequently interrupts or changes the topic during conversations.

Groups role-play the scenario, practicing clarifying questions, turn-taking, and building on ideas. Rotate roles so every group member has a chance to practice.

Questions:

- “Which strategies worked well to resolve the situation?”
- “What was challenging about applying these techniques?”
- “How can you use these strategies in future group interactions?”

5. *Reflection and discussion (10 minutes)*

Reflect on the importance of effective communication and its real-life applications. Facilitate a class discussion with questions like:

- “How do these communication skills help build trust and understanding?”
- “What challenges might arise when trying to communicate empathetically?”

- “How can you handle situations where others aren’t communicating effectively?”

6. Closing activity: communication goals (5 minutes)

Ask each student to write one specific communication goal for the week on a sticky note (e.g., “I will practice asking clarifying questions during group work”). Collect and display the notes on a “Communication Goals” board to serve as a reminder.

Emotional intelligence – lesson plan example

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Identify and label their own emotions and recognize the emotions of others.
- Understand the impact of emotions on decision-making, behavior, and relationships.
- Develop strategies for managing and expressing emotions effectively.

Materials needed:

- A large emotion wheel (printable or drawn on a board).
- Scenario cards featuring real-life emotional challenges.
- Handouts on emotional regulation strategies.
- Sticky notes and markers.

Lesson structure:

Warm-up activity: "emotion charades" (10 minutes)

Write various emotions (e.g., happy, frustrated, anxious) on slips of paper. Students take turns acting out an emotion without speaking, while others guess the emotion. Discuss how recognizing emotions in others is key to emotional intelligence.

Debrief questions:

- "What clues helped you identify the emotion?"
- "Why is it important to recognize how others feel?"

Introduction: the importance of emotional intelligence (10 minutes)

Define emotional intelligence and explain its relevance. Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions while also being able to perceive, interpret, and influence the emotions of others. It is a form of social and emotional competence that integrates cognitive and affective processes. EI is typically divided into five core components (Goleman, 1998):

- Self-awareness: The ability to recognize and understand one's emotions, triggers, and their impact on thoughts and behaviors.
- Self-regulation: The capacity to manage or redirect disruptive emotions and impulses, maintaining self-control in challenging situations.
- Motivation: A drive to pursue goals with energy, persistence, and intrinsic interest, even in the face of setbacks.
- Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of others, recognizing their emotional states and responding appropriately.
- Social skills: Proficiency in managing relationships, resolving conflicts, and fostering positive interactions.

Discuss how EI impacts the students' lives.

Emotion wheel exercise (20 minutes)

Present the emotion wheel, which categorizes emotions into basic and complex groups. See resource here: <https://uca.edu/bewell/files/2020/11/Feelings-Wheel-Learn-How-to-Label-Your-Feelings.pdf>

Provide scenarios, such as:

- A disagreement with a friend.
- Receiving praise for an achievement.
- Feeling nervous before a test.

Ask students to:

Use the emotion wheel to identify the emotions they would feel in the scenarios.

Reflect on why they might feel that way and how the emotions could influence their actions.

Discussion questions:

- “How does identifying an emotion help you manage it better?”
- “Can you think of a time when recognizing an emotion changed how you reacted to a situation?”

Emotional regulation techniques (15 minutes)

Strategies:

- Deep breathing: Practice a simple breathing technique (e.g., inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts).
- Positive self-talk: Encourage students to reframe negative thoughts into positive or realistic ones (e.g., “I can handle this challenge”).
- Taking a break: Teach students to step away from stressful situations to regain composure.
- Expressing feelings constructively: Use “I” statements to communicate emotions (e.g., “I feel upset because...”).
- Reframe the situation: Ask yourself “What can I learn from this unpleasant situation? How can I act/think differently next time I encounter a similar situation?”

Divide students into small groups.

Provide a challenging scenario (e.g., a peer criticizes their work).

Groups discuss how they would use one or more regulation strategies to handle the situation.

Role-playing scenarios: managing emotions in real life (15 minutes)

Provide groups with scenarios that require managing emotions, such as:

- A teammate doesn’t pull their weight in a group project.
- Feeling nervous about speaking in front of the class.
- Being teased by peers about a hobby or interest.

Groups role-play the scenario, focusing on:

- Recognizing and naming their emotions.

- Using emotional regulation techniques.
- Communicating feelings constructively.

Debrief questions:

- “What was the most challenging part of managing your emotions?”
- “How did the strategies help you respond more effectively?”

Closing activity: emotional intelligence goals (5 minutes)

Ask students to write one goal related to emotional intelligence on a sticky note (e.g., “I will practice deep breathing when I feel overwhelmed”). Display the notes on an “Emotional Intelligence Goals” board.

Lesson 2. Strategies for conflict resolution based on Social and Emotional Learning

Within the framework of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), five key skill areas are interconnected: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and organization, responsible problem-solving, and relationship management.

A crucial component of **empathy** highlighted in various SEL programs is the ability of perspective-taking. Empathy generally pertains to a student's capacity to perceive another's emotional state, often experiencing similar feelings when witnessing a peer's distress. In contrast, **perspective-taking** involves a more cognitive understanding of another's situation without necessarily sharing the same emotional response (Smith & Low, 2013). Students adept at perspective-taking are less inclined to engage in various forms of aggression, whether physical, verbal or indirect, towards their classmates (Kaukiainen et al., 1999). Furthermore, these skills increase the likelihood of offering emotional support to others (Litvack-Miller et al., 1997). Almost half of children react to bullying with intense emotional responses, which can enhance their probability of being victimized by peers (Analitis et al., 2009).

Enhancing the ability to **manage powerful emotions**—such as anger, embarrassment, anxiety, fear, and jealousy—can bolster students' capacity to utilize self-talk and other coping mechanisms, which will help them avoid crying, retaliating, or reacting in ways that may render them easy targets for ongoing victimization (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997).

Assertiveness is a social competency frequently incorporated in SEL programs that can alleviate the tendency for bullied students to self-blame. Training in assertiveness can equip victimized students with effective strategies for responding to bullying, such as discussing the issue with others to find a resolution or seeking assistance (Mahady-Wilton et al., 2000). A universal SEL approach that teaches assertiveness may also mitigate bullying by altering

bystander behaviours. Bystanders can often swiftly halt bullying by assertively expressing their disapproval of such conduct (Salmivalli, 2014).

Drawing from the theories of Rahim and Bonoma (1979) identified styles of managing interpersonal conflicts along two main dimensions: concern for self and for others. The first dimension measures the extent to which an individual seeks to address their own needs (high or low), while the second dimension gauges the level of effort made to fulfil others' needs (high or low). The integration of these dimensions results in five specific conflict-handling styles:

1. **Integrating (high concern for self and others):** This style involves transparency, information exchange, and recognition of differences to achieve an effective resolution acceptable to both parties. It is linked to problem-solving and can lead to innovative solutions.

e.g.: Two students, Sarah and Jack, are arguing over who should lead the group project. Sarah wants to present, but Jack feels that his research is crucial to the success of the project. They decide to talk to their teacher, Mr. Brown to mediate. Through their conversation, Sarah and Jack share their perspectives and realize that they both have unique strengths to contribute. With the teacher's help, they agree that Sarah will handle the presentation, while Jack will focus on integrating his research into the presentation slides. They both feel that their needs are met, and the project progresses successfully.

2. **Obliging (low concern for self and high concern for others):** This approach focuses on minimizing differences and highlighting similarities to accommodate the other party's concerns.

e.g.: Sophie and Mia are both in the same choir, and both want to sing the solo in the upcoming school concert. After discussing it with their teacher, Mrs. Carter, Sophie recognizes that Mia has been practicing the song longer and has more experience with solos. Sophie, though she also loves the idea of singing the solo, decides to step aside and support Mia, even though she feels disappointed. Sophie tells Mia, "You've been working so hard for this, and I think you deserve it." She focuses on the shared goal of making the concert successful and minimizes her own desire to sing the solo, choosing instead to support Mia's opportunity.

3. **Dominating (high concern for self and low concern for others):** This style is characterized by a win-lose mentality or behaviour aimed at imposing one's position.

e.g.: During a school game of basketball, Jake and Noah are on opposing teams. Jake is very competitive and wants to win at all costs. He repeatedly takes the ball from Noah without passing it along and refuses to let others have a chance to score, even though it frustrates his teammates. When Noah asks Jake to share the ball more equally, Jake snaps, "I'm playing to win, and I don't care about anyone else's feelings." His focus is solely on winning, disregarding the team's enjoyment and Noah's need for fairness. The teacher on duty, Mr. Lee, notices the tension and steps in to remind Jake about teamwork and fair play.

- 4. Avoiding (low concern for self and others):** This style is associated with withdrawal, deferring responsibility, or avoiding confrontation.
e.g.: In the hallway, two students, Ella and Chloe, have been upset with each other after a disagreement during a group activity earlier in the day. Both are avoiding the situation and refuse to talk about it. Ella walks past Chloe without acknowledging her, and Chloe avoids looking at Ella or making eye contact. Instead of addressing the issue or apologizing, both students hope that the problem will just go away on its own, choosing to stay silent and avoid any confrontation. Their teacher, Mr. Davis, notices the tension and gently approaches them, saying, "I can see there's something bothering both of you. It's important to talk it through so it doesn't keep building up. How about we sit down together and sort it out?" This prompts the students to reluctantly agree to discuss the issue, helping to resolve the conflict.
- 5. Compromising (intermediate concern for self and others):** This approach entails a mutual give-and-take, whereby both parties concede something to reach an agreeable resolution.
e.g.: In a classroom, two students, Lucas and Ava, are arguing over who should use the classroom computer to finish their assignment. Both need it to complete their work before the end of class. After a brief exchange, Lucas suggests, "How about I use the computer for 10 minutes, then you can have it for the last 10 minutes?" Ava agrees to the compromise, and they both feel like they've reached a fair solution. Neither gets exactly what they wanted, but both are satisfied with the arrangement and can finish their tasks without further conflict.

● **Conflict resolution process based on Social-Emotional Learning**

Typically, the conflict resolution process involves the following steps:

Step 1: Calm down

Educators and caregivers often find that urging a distressed child to calm down can be ineffective. Adults frequently struggle to follow their own advice to stay calm in stressful moments. How can they teach children to self-soothe? Calming down entails recognizing one's emotions—self-awareness—and swiftly identifying ways to manage escalating feelings. This emotional skill keeps the brain from slipping into fight-or-flight mode, allowing students to engage in creative and critical problem-solving.

For instance, when Emma suddenly snatched the toy Anna was playing with, Anna recognized her frustration and remembered her teacher's strategy of deep breathing to dispel the "anger cloud" above her head. With each inhalation and exhalation, she imagined the anger dissipating, which enabled her to calm down sufficiently to address the conflict effectively.

Step 2: Avoid put-downs or name-calling

Managing emotions includes the ability to control or delay impulses. A child who has calmed down is likely to avoid name-calling, either due to adherence to rules or genuine respect for the other individual. While rule-based compliance can be unreliable, authentic respect stems from meaningful connections. When students feel connected to themselves and their emotions, they are more likely to respect themselves and others.

In Anna's case, she recalled that Emma was her friend and that they had played together multiple times prior to the conflict. This reflection prevented Anna from resorting to angry name-calling, despite feeling wronged.

Step 3: Use “I-messages” to express feelings and needs

To effectively communicate their feelings using “I-messages” (Gordon, 1970), students must identify their emotions, possess the language skills to articulate them, and feel safe enough to share their true feelings. The ability to express and recognize emotions relies heavily on a safe classroom environment. When a threatening or disrespectful atmosphere prevails, students may struggle to discern their feelings. Educators can foster a supportive environment where students are encouraged to connect with and express their emotions.

Anna’s teacher frequently utilized circle time at the end of the school day for students to reflect on their experiences. Together, they established basic speaking and listening rules, which helped Anna understand that the feelings of Emma and others were equally important to her own. This sense of safety and connection to her feelings empowered her to convey her perspective to Emma during the conflict.

Step 4: Practice active listening

Listening can take many forms, including “not really paying attention,” “listening to find faults,” and “actively listening.” “Not listening” often occurs when the provoked fight-or-flight response fills our thoughts with anger and defensiveness while another person is speaking. When listening to find faults, individuals often focus on countering the opposing view rather than truly hearing the other person. Active listening requires genuine engagement, respect, empathy, and understanding. Developing empathic listening is essential for promoting creativity and critical thinking, facilitating constructive problem-solving.

Anna had practiced authentic listening through classroom exercises that emphasized deep listening, paraphrasing, and the establishment of communication guidelines. This preparation enabled her to carefully consider Emma’s perspective without prematurely judging or assigning blame.

Step 5: Explore solutions that satisfy both parties

Creative solutions arise from focusing on authentic needs, necessitating empathy. A safe classroom environment fosters inquiry and expression of needs, which can evoke vulnerability. Safety is crucial for nurturing creative and critical thinking. When feeling threatened, our thinking capacity diminishes, leading to feelings of helplessness, hindering exploration of options,

and discouraging risk-taking or challenging existing ideas. True cognitive engagement—characterized by connection-making, higher-order thinking, and creativity—cannot thrive in an unsafe setting.

In Anna and Emma's secure classroom environment, they were able to calmly brainstorm potential resolutions to their conflict.

Step 6: Identify the most effective solution

Arriving at a solution that accommodates both parties involves managing feelings of impatience, frustration, disappointment, and fear throughout the process. Maintaining motivation requires hope and optimism, even in the face of setbacks. Finding a solution that meets everyone's needs also involves social skills, including sensitivity to others, problem-solving abilities, and effective communication.

Anna and Emma observed other children reconciling after conflicts. Though it took them some time to reconcile, they ultimately agreed to play with the toy together, as Anna recognized that Emma had been waiting patiently and had snatched the toy out of frustration at not knowing how else to engage.

Activity 1: “The tower challenge”

Objective: to foster teamwork, collaboration, and trust by having students work together to complete a physical task.

Materials needed: building materials (e.g., straws, paper clips, tape, rubber bands)

Introduction: explain to students that they will work in teams to build the tallest tower they can using limited materials. the objective is to collaborate and rely on each other's ideas and skills.

Divide into teams: split the class into small teams of 3–5 students. Give each team a set of building materials (straws, paper clips, tape, etc.).

Build the tower: set a time limit (e.g., 15 minutes) for students to construct their towers. They must work together, share ideas, and solve problems as a team.

Assess the results: after the time is up, measure the height of each team's tower. The team with the tallest tower wins.

Debrief: after the challenge, ask the students to reflect on the teamwork process:

- How did your team work together to build the tower?
- What communication strategies helped your team succeed?
- How did it feel to rely on others and contribute to the team's success?
- How can teamwork help us handle conflicts and prevent bullying?

Activity 2: Trust-building circle - “Circle of support”

Objective: to build trust and communication in the classroom and encourage a sense of community.

Introduction: explain that in this activity, students will form a circle and share something personal about themselves, but only if they feel comfortable. The goal is to create an environment of trust and support.

Form the circle: have students stand in a circle, with each student having a moment to share. You can prompt them with open-ended questions like:

- “What’s something you are proud of?”
- “What’s a challenge you’ve overcome?”
- “Who is someone you look up to, and why?”

Share and listen: as each student shares, encourage the others to listen attentively and respectfully. After each student shares, the group can respond with positive affirmations like “That’s amazing!” or “You’re so brave for sharing.”

Debrief: once everyone has shared, discuss:

- How did it feel to share something personal with the group?
- How did it feel to listen and offer support to your classmates?
- What can we do as a class to ensure everyone feels comfortable and supported in the future?

Activity 3: Trust-building circle - trust building through "partner trust walk "

Objective: to build trust and strengthen communication between students by having one partner rely on the other for guidance.

Materials needed: blindfolds (one per pair), open space with obstacles (e.g., chairs, cones)

Introduction: explain to students that the goal of this activity is to build trust between partners. One student will be blindfolded, while the other will act as the guide, leading them through an obstacle course.

Set up the course: arrange obstacles in the classroom or outdoor space, making sure they are safe for students to navigate.

Pair students: pair up students, one will be blindfolded while the other will give verbal directions, guiding them through the course without touching them.

Trust walk: The guide should communicate clearly, helping the blindfolded student navigate the obstacles. After completing the course, students should switch roles.

Debrief: after the activity, gather the students to reflect:

- How did it feel to trust someone completely?
- What role did communication play in helping you navigate the course?

- How can we apply this experience of trust to our daily interactions in the classroom?

Lesson 3: Using creative drama

In the context of developing anti-bullying behaviors, incorporating drama into education offers a unique and powerful approach. One of the primary goals of using drama in schools is to help students gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. Drama allows participants to engage in imaginative exercises without the real-world consequences of their actions, providing a safe space for exploration (Edmiston, 2000). By adopting different roles and perspectives, students can experience the challenges faced by others, such as those experienced by bullied individuals.

In educational drama, students are tasked with role-playing, which requires them to adopt the perspective of others. This process encourages empathy and critical thinking as students are prompted to understand the feelings, intentions and motives of those they portray (Kouretzis, 2008). By becoming the "other" in role-playing activities, students can develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives, which can reduce interpersonal conflicts and promote social support. Research has shown that higher levels of empathy are negatively correlated with antisocial behavior, such as bullying and aggression (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). Furthermore, as Neelands (2002) suggests, drama encourages students to recognize and celebrate differences, fostering inclusivity and empathy.

For example, the *Image Theatre* technique, developed by Augusto Boal (2002), offers another method to explore bullying in schools. In this approach, students use their bodies to create "sculptures" representing bullying situations, which they then alter to depict more positive resolutions. This exercise encourages collective problem-solving and allows participants to visualize and embody change, reinforcing the idea that bullying can be confronted and transformed through collaborative effort. This method also fosters empathy and provides an opportunity for students to share their feelings and thoughts about bullying.

Role-playing scenario: Exclusion during recess time

This type of scenario involves all the parties that can usually be found in a bullying situation: the bullies, the victim, the bystanders and a teacher, in a mediating role. Through this exercise, students will explore perspectives, reflect on their actions and develop empathy.

Number of participants: 7-8 students

- **2 bullies**
- **1 victim**
- **2 bystanders**
- **1 teacher**
- **1 observer (Obi)**

The teacher can take on the same role in the scenario. We recommend that the observer (Obi) is another student. This way we foster authentic perspective and feedback about the situations that can be depicted in the scenarios. Some students can feel the need to freeze in a particular situation, whereas another does not feel bothered or does not feel the need for explanation or a discussion regarding the same situation. Therefore, this type of structure can be replayed multiple times with the same scenario because it can offer unique opportunities to reflect. This scenario is inspired by a technique developed by Augusto Boal (2002) called the *Forum Theatre*.

Scenario overview:

The situation takes place during recess in the school playground. A group of students is playing together and a student (the victim) is trying to join in but is excluded by the group. The bullies make fun of the victim's clothes and interests, while the bystanders hesitate to intervene. The teacher is nearby, but unaware of the situation until later when the conflict escalates.

Roles and positions:

- **Bully 1 (Liam):** You are the leader of the group and you think it's funny to make others feel bad. You start the exclusion.
- **Bully 2 (Sarah):** You follow the lead of Liam and laugh along with the bullying. You join in teasing the victim.
- **Victim (Alex):** You are a shy student who just wants to be included. You feel sad and embarrassed as the bullies make fun of you.
- **Bystander 1 (Jordan):** You are standing nearby and see what's happening. You're not sure whether to step in, but you feel uncomfortable.
- **Bystander 2 (Emma):** You are also a bystander, but you're worried about getting involved because you fear the bullies might turn on you.
- **Teacher (Mr. Green):** You are supervising the playground and notice the commotion, but you don't see the whole incident unfold.
- **Observer (Obi):** Obi is an outside observer who can "freeze" the play at critical moments to reflect on what's happening.

Scene 1

(Liam and Sarah are playing soccer with other students. Alex, the victim, approaches the group.)

Alex (victim): "Hey, can I play too?"

Liam (bully 1): *(Laughing)* "With those shoes? I don't think so."

Sarah (bully 2): "Yeah, you're terrible at soccer. Go away."

Alex (victim): *(Looks disappointed, tries to join anyway.)*

Liam (bully 1): "No one wants to play with you. You're always alone."

Jordan (bystander 1): *(Glances at Emma, uncomfortable, but doesn't speak up.)*

Emma (bystander 2): *(Hesitates, looks away, says nothing.)*

Obi (observer): Freezes the play.

Freeze moment 1

Reflection questions:

"What's happening in this moment? How does Alex feel? Why do you think the bystanders aren't intervening?"

(for the teacher) **Possible reason for freezing:**

This freeze moment highlights the start of bullying and the exclusion of Alex. The bystanders' silence is noticeable. It's a critical moment to reflect on the impact of exclusion and the emotional toll it takes on the victim. The group should also reflect on the reasons why bystanders might hesitate to step in.

Scene 2

(As Alex walks away from the group, feeling hurt, the teacher approaches the group.)

Mr. Green (teacher): "What's going on here? I heard some teasing. Liam, Sarah, what's happening?"

Liam (bully 1): "We were just playing, nothing serious."

Sarah (bully 2): "Yeah, just joking around, it's no big deal."

Mr. Green (teacher): *(Looks at Alex, who is sitting alone, visibly upset.)* "Alex, are you okay? Why are you sitting over here by yourself?"

Alex (victim): *(Quietly, voice shaking)* "They... they don't want me to play with them."

Mr. Green (teacher): *(Turning to Liam and Sarah)* "Is that true? Is this how we treat our classmates?"

Liam (bully 1): *(Looks away, uncomfortable)* "Uh... we were just kidding."

Sarah (bully 2): *(Defensively)* "It's not like we meant anything bad by it."

Mr. Green (teacher): *(Firmly)* "Excluding others like that isn't funny. How would you feel if it was you being left out, Alex?"

(Liam and Sarah are silent, looking uneasy.)

Mr. Green (teacher): *(Turning to the bystanders)* "Jordan, Emma, you were standing there. How did you feel when you saw what was happening?"

Jordan (bystander 1): "I didn't know what to say. I didn't want to get in trouble."

Emma (bystander 2): "I felt bad for Alex, but I didn't want the bullies to turn on me."

Mr. Green (teacher): *(Nods thoughtfully)* "It's tough to speak up sometimes, but it's important. We all have a role to play in making sure no one feels left out."

(The teacher looks at Alex and offers a comforting smile.)

Mr. Green (teacher): "Alex, I'm really sorry you were treated this way. Let's make sure this doesn't happen again, okay?"

Obi (observer): Freezes the play.

Freeze moment 2:

Reflection question:

"How do you feel about the teacher's response? What could the bystanders have done differently? How can we help Alex feel included?"

(for the teacher) Possible reason for freezing:

This moment is key because it shows how the teacher begins to notice the situation, but the bullying has already taken place. The freeze allows for reflection on how the bystanders could have intervened earlier and how the teacher's role is crucial in addressing bullying. The group can also discuss the potential consequences of ignoring bullying and how everyone can play a part in preventing it.

Post-role-play reflection:

1. How did the actions of the bullies, bystanders and teacher affect the situation?
2. What could have been done differently at each stage of the scenario?
3. How can we support classmates who feel excluded or bullied?
4. What role can bystanders play in helping to stop bullying?

Lesson 4: Using bibliotherapy: literature and reading-based activities to encourage reflection on bullying themes.

Bibliotherapy is defined as "the use of reading to produce affective change and to promote personality growth and development" (Hebert & Furner, 1997, p. 169). It focuses on helping children address developmental needs through reading, rather than providing clinical or individualized therapy (Doll & Doll, 1997). In a classroom context, bibliotherapy is often referred to as *developmental bibliotherapy*, where children engage with stories to explore emotions, coping strategies, and social issues such as bullying.

An example of bibliotherapy in action is found in *Froxylanthi's Flag* (Dikaiou, 2008), where a young girl named Isidora is bullied by a classmate, Elina. The story portrays how other students and the teacher fail to intervene, leaving the situation unchanged until a fellow student reveals the truth. The narrative presents different roles in bullying, such as the bully, victim, bystander and the passive adults. This story can serve as a foundation for discussions about bullying and its impact, allowing children to explore the various perspectives involved.

Selecting appropriate books is crucial for effective bibliotherapy. When choosing books, it is important to consider the characters' gender, the types of bullying portrayed, the roles of the characters in bullying (such as bullies, victims, or bystanders) and the coping strategies shown. A study by Entenmen et al. (2005) analyzed 25 picture books on bullying, finding that verbal bullying was the most common form depicted, followed by physical bullying. The majority of these books included bystanders, whose reactions varied from assisting the victim to encouraging the bully. Adults were also frequently involved, either offering help or intervening in some way.

Activity 1: Empathy mapping through bibliotherapy

The main objective is to help students reflect on the feelings of those involved in bullying, fostering empathy and understanding, using an empathy mapping activity (Gray, 2010).

Materials needed: a short story about bullying, either a real book or a created story; empathy mapping template (a simple chart with sections for: "*What the bully might feel*," "*What the victim might feel*," "*What the bystander might feel*"); markers or colored pens.

The New Kid in Class (A made-up story for this activity)

Summary:

A new student, Sam, joins a school and is immediately bullied by a group of classmates led by Alex. Sam is teased about his clothes and accent and though a few classmates, including Maya, see the bullying happening, they don't intervene. Eventually, Maya starts to feel uncomfortable and tries to help Sam by inviting him to sit with her at lunch, standing up to Alex, and talking to the teacher.

Activity plan:

1. **Read the story aloud** to the students or ask them to read it silently.
2. After reading, **divide the students into small groups**. Provide each group with an empathy mapping template and ask them to fill it out for each of the three main roles in the story:
 - **The Bully (Alex):** What might Alex feel and why does he bully Sam?
 - **The Victim (Sam):** How might Sam feel when being bullied? What does Sam need from others?
 - **The Bystander (Maya):** What might Maya feel as she watches the bullying happen? Why does she hesitate to intervene at first?
3. **Discussion:** After completing the empathy maps, each group will share their reflections.
Discuss:
 - How does understanding each character's emotions affect how we see bullying?
 - What role do bystanders play, and how can they make a difference?
 - How can we better support victims like Sam, and prevent situations like this in the future?
4. **Reflection:** As a class, reflect on how empathy can help change the outcome of bullying situations. Ask:
 - How can you apply these feelings to real-life situations?
 - What would happen if more students like Maya stood up for Sam?

Activity 2: Create a *Defender's guide* through bibliotherapy

The main objective is to encourage students to recognize ways they can stand up against bullying and become active defenders.

Materials needed: a bullying-themed picture book or short story (e.g., *The Recess Queen* by Alexis O'Neill); paper and colored pencils; *Defender's guide* template (a simple booklet where each page gives space for drawing or writing).

The Recess Queen by Alexis O'Neill (2002)

Summary:

The story revolves around a student named Mean Jean, who rules the playground with bullying behavior. She orders others around, but when a new student, Katie Sue, refuses to be intimidated and stands up for herself, things begin to change. The story showcases the power of standing up to a bully and the impact of taking a peaceful yet firm stand.

Activity plan:

1. **Read the book aloud** to the class or have students read it in pairs.
2. After reading, **discuss the main themes:**
 - How did Katie Sue stop Mean Jean's bullying?
 - How did the other students on the playground react, and why did they start to change their behavior?
 - What role did the teacher or adults play in the situation?
3. **Activity Setup:**
 - Give each student a *Defender's Guide* template and ask them to create their own page for the guide, drawing or writing about **one specific way they could stand up for someone who is being bullied**. They should include: a description of what bullying looks like; a drawing of a *Defender* (someone like Katie Sue); a written action plan for how they could intervene if they witness bullying (e.g., standing up to the bully, supporting the victim, or telling a trusted adult).
4. **Discussion:**
 - Invite students to share their "Defender's Guide" pages with the class.
 - Discuss how everyone's actions can lead to a positive change in a bullying situation, and how it's important to not remain a bystander.
5. **Reflection:**
 - What would happen if we all became defenders like Katie Sue?
 - How does it feel to be a defender, and how might others react when we stand up against bullying?

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Annex 5. The empathy map for [insert person name/group name]

Instructions:

- Read the scenario carefully.
- Complete each quadrant by answering the guiding questions provided.
- Use what you write to discuss how understanding another person's perspective can lead to better communication and relationships.

Examples of scenarios that teachers can propose:

- A student is left out of a group project.
- A student is left out of a social activity.
- Chris posts a funny photo of himself on social media, but others begin leaving mean comments and making fun of his appearance.
- A new student, Sam, has transferred to the school mid-semester. Sam is shy, speaks with an accent, and seems nervous in social settings. Other students rarely interact with Sam.
- During a class presentation, Morgan forgets her lines and stumbles over her words. Some classmates laugh, and Morgan looks visibly upset and avoids speaking for the rest of the class.

<p>THINKS</p> <p>What might they be thinking?</p>	<p>FEELS</p> <p>What emotions are they experiencing?</p>
<p>SAYS</p> <p>What might they be saying (aloud or to themselves)?</p>	<p>DOES</p> <p>How do they act? What behaviours/actions are they showing?</p>