

Module 11: Sample workshops on anti-bullying activities

Objective:

- Help teachers/school staff to conduct hands-on workshops that engage students creatively in anti-bullying education.

Summary of content:

- Workshop structural elements.
- Introducing the Six square art activity
- Introducing collaborative mural activity promoting unity, inclusion, and mutual respect.
- The bullying-free art exhibition

Lesson 1. Workshop structural elements

In the previous chapters we have shown the effects of bullying on student's well-being and academic achievements. But what can you, as a teacher, do to limit the spread of this phenomena and increase both awareness and social skills in students? Research has shown that zero-tolerance policies or grouping bullies together (Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Committee on Law and Justice, Institute of Medicine, & National Research Council, 2014) are not effective in tackling this issue. And it makes sense, if we consider the fact that bullying does not only involve perpetrators and victims, but rather the school environment as a whole, where most students have a chance of embodying the role of the bystanders.

Therefore, teachers should focus on delivering anti-bullying education in a way that targets all students and grants them the ability to gain not only knowledge on this subject matter, but also equip them with skills to identify and react to such instances. And what better way to do this than employing the workshop format!

But how does a workshop come to be? You may think that a workshop begins and ends during an arbitrary allotted time in the classroom. However, a successful workshop begins way beforehand, starting with careful planning on the facilitator's part, which means you, as a counsellor or a teacher, have to clarify a few things before going ahead with this endeavour.

First and foremost, you have to define **the objectives** of what you're hoping to achieve – do you want to help students understand the different type of bullying behaviours that exist and may not be aware of? Or maybe you want to teach them various interpersonal skills that help them stand up for themselves and others when confronted with bullying behaviour.

Along the main objectives, **the number and profile of the participants** will dictate what sort of activities will be included, as well as the duration of the workshop. Steinert (1992) suggests that we take into account the participant's familiarity with the subject, as well as their needs and expectations when deciding what pieces of information to deliver and through which means. She also gives valuable advice regarding the main components of workshops in general.

Another pre-workshop step is to create a **written plan** of the workshop. This plan should include, besides the information presented above, the activities you want to conduct, the time frame for each activity, and the resources you will need (room, chairs, didactic materials etc.).

When actually conducting the workshop, start with an **introductory step**, where the teacher gives a quick insight into the proposed subject. Additionally, they can also ask question related to the subject at hand, both as an *ice-breaker* and as a way of gauging the classroom's *level of knowledge*. Here, the main goal is to briefly inform the students and help them warm-up to one-another.

Sometimes students may shy away from introducing themselves or share personal experiences. An ice-breaker activity you might find useful is blind voting (Mattey et al., 2014). Students are asked to close their eyes and close-ended questions regarding their experiences related to bullying are asked. Students answer anonymously by raising their hands, while the teacher keeps track. At the end, they are asked to open their eyes and discover the answers. More likely than not, they will be surprised to observe that their experiences are shared by their peers, which might help them mitigate feelings of alienation or shame. What is important to keep in mind during this introductory phase is that creating a relaxing atmosphere where everyone feels safe is crucial for engaging everyone and ensuring that the workshop is successful.

As the students are now aware of the subject at hand, you can **outline the main objectives** of the course, highlighting their importance. Flexibility is key here, as students might feel that the objectives are not adequate to their needs, so you might need to adapt pre-planned exercises in a way that suits them. For example, the teacher may want to discuss the effects of bullying on the victim, but students might be more interested in how to help the victim mitigate these effects. Rather than role-playing a bullying scenario where the focus is on the act, students can role-play a scenario with how the victim can respond to the situation.

And now for the fun part! The bread and butter of any workshop are its **activities**, and while expanding students' knowledge is a must, the teacher must remember that they are not holding a lecture in front of a passive audience, but rather aim to promote collaborative participation.

This does not mean that the teacher should forgo all teaching aspects, but rather they should create a balance between information delivery and practical activities. One easy way of doing so is by breaking down the elements of the workshop relating them to each proposed goal. Therefore, each group of exercises that focus on a particular topic could be preceded by a mini-presentation, which could be engaging in itself – making catchy power-point slides that are breathy and rely mostly on images and key words, as opposed to pages fully loaded with text may ease the students.

If you feel daring, you can even use pop-culture references or memes, just be careful that they feel authentic to you, otherwise teenagers might be put off by the fake persona. And also, don't forget about pacing – while it's important to have an overall guideline for how long

things should last, allow yourself to adapt to the needs of the group, by either pacing things up or slowing them down.

Below you will see a list of group activities and how they can relate to the workshop's objective.

Objective	Suggested Activity	Description
Increase awareness about the impact of bullying	Role-playing scenarios	Students act out bullying situations, exploring different perspective and their effect on their mood and well-being
Empower students to act against bullying	Intervention strategies	Demonstrate and practice ways to intervene as a bystander to support the victim
Foster critical thinking about group dynamics	Class discussions	Facilitate conversations about causes and effects of bullying with the aid of leading questions or hypothetical scenarios
Enhance cooperation	Group art activities	Students create collaborative artworks depicting different facets of bullying

Can you think of other activities that would help attain the same objectives? Or maybe you are interested in developing a skill not presented here. Whichever the case, try to make your own table. It will come in handy!

Why group, you may ask? Well, sitting in smaller groups allows participants to actually interact with one another and with the task at hand, leading to collaborative efforts that help develop social skills. If the whole class forms a singular group, the majority of the students will probably adopt a more passive stance.

Finally, as you approach the end of the workshop, think of a way of **summarizing** the aspects that were discussed. Also, you can include a **closing activity**, that can reinforce what was done and orient the students towards future goals related to bullying or interpersonal skills or other relevant topics. One useful approach would be to ask students what is one idea that best describes the workshop's topic – this way they are engaged during the recap, but you can also get precious **feedback** on the workshop's efficacy, which will help you improve further ones.

Let's check out some activities that might come in handy when you organise a bullying-related workshop.

Lesson 2. Six square art activity

One creative activity that can be used to reflect different aspects of bullying is the six square art activity, where students can be asked to draw a figure that represents a certain type of participant, such as a victim or a bully.

Materials:

- Sheets of paper divided into six squares.
- Two sets of cards:

Role cards: Describe the participant's role in the bullying situation (e.g., bully, victim, bystander, defender).

Character cards: Describe the physical traits and personalities of the drawn figures (e.g., "A boy with curly hair wearing a striped shirt").

- Precut cardboard squares (or sticky notes) to cover drawings between rounds.
- Markers, crayons, or coloured pencils for drawing.

To prepare for this activity, groups of six will be formed. Each group will receive 6 paper sheets divided into six squares and two sets of card descriptions. Each student will be given 5 minutes to fill a square of the paper following the instructions of the cards they received. After that, they will cover that section by either folding the paper or using a precut cardboard square and will pass the sheet to their right colleague, until all six squares are complete. After each drawing round, the students will receive a new combo of cards and the previous ones will be discarded.

One set will describe the type of participant. For example, the card for the defender could read like this 'Someone who stands up against bullying by protecting the victim or stopping the bullying behaviour.'. The other set of cards (character cards) will represent physical characteristics of the drawn figure ('A girl with long hair, pink dress, gold glasses'). Unbeknownst to them, the cards will be distributed in such a way that each type of character will illustrate every type of participant, highlighting the roles' fluidity and dynamics.

After finishing the last square, the students will reveal the whole sheet and will be asked to discuss what they observe. To help them, the teacher could suggest a series of leading questions such as:

- 'How did you feel creating each role?',
- 'Which role do you think is the hardest to understand or empathize with?',
- 'How can each role impact the bullying situation?'

These prompts help students reflect on the experience and foster a deeper understanding of the roles.

Through this activity, students can step into the shoes of others and consider perspectives they may not have previously understood. The combination of participant roles and diverse character representations encourages them to challenge stereotypes.

Lesson 2. The mural activity

A big long-term activity that will include all students can be a mural art activity. This can be a very efficient idea because students will have to work together to accomplish one singular goal and their art can be there everyday to remind them of what teamwork means and what it can lead to. For example, in an antibullying program, a mural painting which can cover a wall inside their school will be done by the high-schoolers and it will contain themes such as inclusion and respect towards all the others. Also, they will appreciate and support each other's contributions, as every individual will play a role in the whole, final result. This way, they will learn that unity is important in spite of their differences and working together will strengthen their empathy (Yende, 2024).

The mural will represent a whole process that the students will have to go through. First, they need to **start making plans** about the location of the mural, what it is going to represent, its concept (for this, the teacher can organise a brainstorming session where anyone can come with ideas about the painting).

After that, they need to think about **the design**, what exactly they want to do and what they want to see after the activity is over. For this, it would be important (as soon as they have a clear idea about what they would want the painting to look like) that everyone should contribute to it and all of them should add a little piece of their imagination, so that it can be appreciated as a whole, by themselves and by their colleagues.

After this comes maybe the most important step of the project: **painting the mural**. This might be the step that involves the greatest part of the high-schoolers working together. They will have to bring all sorts of instruments and materials, such as paint of all kinds of colours, pencils, brushes. Eventually, this activity will come down to sharing: all of them will have to share to share each other's materials.

The teacher's role in such a plan can be very important. Studies show that, in many cases, teachers do not interfere with students' activities during breaks, including bullying, whether or not they are present in that moment around them (Veenstra et al., 2014). This can be perceived as disinterest by the students, who will cease to see teachers as authorities who are able to help them (Novick, & Isaacs, 2010). Moreover, teachers do not perceive bullying the same way as scholars do (Bradshaw et al., 2007), which may result in them minimising the impact that it has on teenagers. So, in this project, teachers will need to be an active part, as their intervention can reduce bullying during the whole process. It would be ideal for them to suggest the painting to the high-schoolers and guide them while planning and organising the mural; they should also contribute to painting, helping the students while they are working and also verbalising their appreciation for the team work. In case of a conflict, they need to intervene and try to improve the situation.

Another way that the mural activity can be adapted to become an anti-bullying one is **"casting" the students** in different roles before they begin painting. Assuming that teachers must know beforehand what roles the teenagers have in real life, they should create a scenario where they have to put themselves in the others' place. For example, if the teacher notices that a certain student tends to be aggressive towards the others, during the mural activity they can receive the role of the victim and create a painting that expresses the feelings a victim can have,

such as fear and isolation. Also, other students can have the role of bystanders and express what they feel like when seeing acts of bullying without intervening or how standing up for the victim can change the situation. The role of the bully is an interesting one too, because it can give the students the chance to see from a bully's perspective, what their motivation might be and how being aggressive can make them feel. They can try to understand the insecurities such a person has and why they chose to have a harmful behaviour towards the others. For this roleplay to happen, the teacher must observe the students' behaviour, what they act like not only during class, but also during breaks, the dynamics of the groups they are part of, so that each of them can get the chance to see another person's perspective.

This activity alone can change the way they see each other or make them realise that they haven't tried yet to understand why such harmful events can occur during school time. Antibullying activities are not beneficial only for students, but also for the teachers, who have the chance to understand better what is happening around them and what they should pay attention to.

To assess the impact of the mural activity and monitor its effectiveness in promoting anti-bullying themes, the following discussion questions can be addressed:

- "What was your favorite part of the mural activity, and why?"
- "How did you feel about contributing to a project where everyone played a role?"
- "Did this activity help you see others' perspectives more clearly? Can you share an example?"
- "How did working together change the way you think about your classmates or peers?"
- "What did you learn from the role you were assigned (victim, bystander, bully)?"
- "Did taking on a role help you better understand the dynamics of bullying? How?"
- "Were there any disagreements or conflicts during the activity? How did you and your peers resolve them?"
- "How did the mural project show you the importance of teamwork and collaboration?"
- "What do you think the mural says about inclusion and respect at our school?"

Lesson 4. Anti-bullying art exhibition

Since through art points can be made and team working can help scholars be more empathetic and willing to collaborate with their peers, another artistic activity centered on anti-bullying will help them understand better the whole idea. This time, teachers will organise an art exhibition where every high-schooler will have the chance to display their own work of art.

Materials:

- Art supplies (e.g., paper, paints, brushes, markers, colored pencils).
- Cameras or smartphones for photography.
- Writing materials for poems and stories.
- Display boards or stands for showcasing art.
- Title cards for each piece, including the student's name and a brief description of their work.

- A designated space for the exhibition (e.g., school hallway, auditorium).

Introduce the project

Help students understand the purpose of the art exhibition and its connection to bullying prevention. Begin with a group discussion on the effects of bullying, the importance of empathy, and the power of art as a tool for change. Show examples of anti-bullying artwork or campaigns to inspire creativity. Explain the **exhibition's theme** (for example): "Empathy, inclusion, and respect: together against bullying."

Brainstorm and plan

Help students develop ideas for their individual projects. Provide students with brainstorming worksheets to organize their ideas:

- "What story do you want your art to tell?"
- "What materials or techniques will you use?"
- "What emotions or messages do you want viewers to feel or understand?"

Allow students to sketch initial drafts or write outlines for their projects. Teachers will circulate, offering feedback and guidance.

Create the art work

Depending on the setting and resources, that artwork can be created in one session or more (let's say 3 sessions of about 50 minutes each, during visual arts class).

Individually, they will use their imagination to transpose visually or through words the way they feel about the exhibition's theme. Teachers supervise, offering assistance with techniques, materials, or conceptual ideas.

They can create drawings, paintings, photographs, poems, stories about it, where they can expose different points of view, such as the victim's point of view and how they feel, the bully's motivation to be part of such actions, the consequences of bullying for both parts, they can also propose ways of preventing bullying or create works about noble feelings like empathy, patience, understanding and respecting the ones around you.

Prepare the exhibition

Work with school administration to decide what setting is best for the exhibition, how to display the works, how to advertise the exhibition and who can attend.

Work with students to curate the exhibition, ensuring that each piece is appropriately displayed. Write and attach title cards for each artwork, including the title of the piece and a short description explaining the message behind the artwork.

Try to open the exhibition to as much people as possible in the community, including students, families, local authorities figures. Allow students to stand by their artwork, answer questions, and explain their creative process and message. Encourage visitors to leave feedback or messages of support for the artists.

Follow-up reflection with the students

After the exhibition ends, organise a follow-up discussion with students, to find out:

- "How did it feel to express your thoughts about bullying through art?"
- "What messages or themes from your classmates' art resonated with you the most?"
- "How do you think this exhibition could help our school community address bullying?"

If you think it's suitable, you can also give a written assignment with the theme "How an exhibition changed my perspective on bullying" or "How an exhibition made me a better colleague".

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