

Title

Bullying¹

Short description

Physical or emotional bullying, on site or virtual harassment is one of the distress signals that may indicate the danger of students dropping out. Identification of this signal is not always easy as actions rarely take place in class or in the presence of teachers, adults. Therefore this tool is aiming at getting information from students.

Detailed description of the tool and required materials, attachments

Bullying and harassment are three sided phenomenon: the one or the group who is the aggressor, the victim and the onlookers. This is why it is often called “mobbing”. For the sake of this tool we do not consider individual aggression taking place between two students “bullying”. The integral part of bullying is the group of physically passive onlookers. Most harassment or bullying would not happen without the “audience” that is encouraging the aggressor. Encouragement could be verbal reinforcement but being frightened or even feeling sympathy for the victim. This is the reason why research suggests to work with the largest group, the onlookers as well rather than only with the aggressor or the victim.

Bullying can also be seen as a subculture that develops and takes roots deeply in a community. This means that administrative actions, punishments, detective work are rarely successful ways in weeding it out. Actually, these may make the situation worse.

This tool suggests to identify the presence and the scope of bullying and harassment in two steps: first to identify if there is bullying at all, and second to reveal its scope and the possible three groups mentioned above.

Students, as all people, do not like to admit openly that they are committing bullying

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or are victims of it either. Those who are aggressors feel being threatened by the investigation, and those who are victims often blame themselves and after a while think that they deserve “punishment”. In order to find out the presence of bullying it is suggested to use a simple questionnaire addressing students as onlookers: have they seen or heard about *other students* bullying or being bullied? By having the attached questionnaire filled out by students (or by a sample of students) in the school valid information could be gathered. Ask students to answer the questionnaire in class individually and collect the sheets in a closed box so that they can see that their responses cannot be identified in any way. Try to prevent students talking to each other or sharing their concerns when they fill out the questionnaire.

Process the data by forming groups of responses. A coding suggestion is also attached so that data could be processed electronically by making a simple Excel file. Do not use any statistics if the numbers of responses are less than 50. Even with this number statistical methods have very limited relevance. This is only an indication whether step two has to be done or not. If it is found that bullying or harassment is strongly present it is advised to do student interviews in step 2.

The aim of the interviews with students is to find out the scope and seriousness of the problem. It is **NOT** to find out who is bullying whom. This tool is about getting to know the situation and not to intervene. Intervention may only start when we know enough and planned the process.

Interviews could be done individually or in groups. Both have its pros and cons. Individual interviews are more personal and could provide more concrete information but put an extreme stress on students. Group interviews are less stressful for the participants but could lead to confabulation due to a growing group pressure and results may not be adequate. Interviews should be more like a discussion and the teacher leading it should not make notes during the interview. Try to remember

- actions,
- feelings

- attitudes

mentioned during the interview and make notes right after the event. Remember: the focus should be on the “passive” onlookers, all names deter your attention from the target group! You can only stop bullying or harassment by changing the behavior of the supportive audience and definitely will not be successful if you wish to chase down the aggressor(s) or defend the victim(s).

User’s guide, equipment

Equipment	Quantity
Questionnaire	One master copy and preferably one to all students if done on paper.
A comfortable room for interviews.	

Level of difficulty (easy, medium, advanced)

medium

Tags:

situation analysis, data collection, distress signals, bullying, harassment

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This tool can be found on the project website: crocoos.tka.hu

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