

Student School Groups

Each of the student groups listed below are possible groups to educate students about acceptance and diversity. Such groups also offer a place to connect students who are at-risk or are being victimized by bullies. These groups are educated about acceptance, and can help socialize those at-risk kids who need it, stronger social skills, connection to the school, as well as a social network, which helps to reduce the likelihood of bullying.

Peer Mentoring: An educational program in which better informed or situated students in a school (usually older) inform new incoming students about the school, policies, culture of the school, etc. While it is often associated with older students mentoring younger students, it can also be used to orientate newly transferred students to the school, or to even connect isolated students to a group, and the school in general. The benefits for addressing bullying include connecting new or isolated students to a group, which is one of the primary factors that reduce the likelihood of bullying. As well, it can make a student feel more connected to a school, which is important to reduce a student dropping out of school. It can also help to educate isolated students about appropriate ways of interacting, if they are limited in social skills, without ridiculing or bullying them. For bullies, it can educate them about positive ways to interact with others, as opposed to gaining power and attention through bullying.

Younger Student Mentoring Programs (Big Brothers/Sisters): There are multiple programs available that can be established, used or created that rely on group or one-on-one mentoring of older kids with younger kids. The programs are often structured on a regular basis, ranging from community activities to simply having lunch with the same elementary student(s) each week. Mentoring of kids at the elementary school can give older students a sense of empowerment that can reduce the impact of bullying, or reduce the desire to bully. This will not work for all kids, so choosing which students to include will be determined by an assessment, often by a counselor. Mentoring younger kids can also help bullies to develop empathy, which can help them not to bully. This also has long term effects, as younger kids can learn appropriate ways of interacting, which will reduce bullying in future years.

Leadership Groups/Organizations: Groups or clubs that promote leadership can often be a positive way to educate students on the importance of acceptance and inclusion, which can also introduce issues surrounding bullying and sexual harassment. These groups can help to lead programs to change the culture of the school. They can also be sites for educating students about such issues, which can then be used on other groups and students. Students who join these groups can also learn the social skills to get along in the school, which they may have been lacking previously. These groups, when created, however, need to have a component that focuses on acceptance and diversity. Otherwise, such avenues can lead to creating groups who isolate others, or they themselves become isolated.

Social Education Groups/Clubs (Bullying Education, Disability Education/Connection): There are a number of clubs that have students working together to interact in a specific arena, as well as to educate others about specific issues and/or groups. These can include such issues as educating younger

kids about bullying, or any students about kids with disabilities. All of these groups focus on the diversity of experiences and the acceptance of all others. This can help to change the culture of the school by educating others about groups or situations that directly contribute to bullying and sexual harassment, as well as can be used to connect a victim (or potential victim) to a group or the school in general. It can also educate a bully about their behaviors, as well as more appropriate ways to interact.

Community Outreach Group (Soroptimist Club): There are a number of programs that exist that allow students to work in the community, whether at multiple venues, or volunteering at a specific location. Engaging in the community and giving back empowers students, which can limit the negative feelings they have as a result of bullying. This also connects them to other students, the school, and to the community in general, which is important to reducing the impact of bullying, as well as reduce the likelihood of being bullied.

Cultural Groups/Multicultural Groups: There are often a number of groups that exist (or can be established) at schools that focus on connecting individuals from similar cultural backgrounds. This can be helpful in connecting isolated students to a group, and ultimately the school, thus limiting the likelihood they will stop attending. Multicultural Groups can also be established with the intent of outreach to others about accepting diversity. Educating students about diversity and acceptance is an important aspect of changing the culture at a school. This informs all students that bullying because of difference is not acceptable at a school. It also educates others about how to accept those who differ from us, making it easier to befriend isolated students who often do not fit in with the general culture of the school.

Gay-Straight Alliance/LGBT Groups: Establishing such groups allows kids who do question or are struggling with their sexuality (or who come from families who have members who are going through similar issues) to connect with others who are experiencing similar situations. This, as with the other groups, connects students to a group, which connects them to the school. Even more so, having such clubs on campus inform all students about the intent of the school for the acceptance of diversity. There will often be a backlash when establishing such groups, but, eventually, they become part of the culture of the school. This, again, helps to change the culture of the school in general.