



## MAKING DECISIONS: ALLY OR BYSTANDER

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**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** 3 – 8

**LENGTH OF TIME:** 45 minutes

### GOALS

- To increase ally behavior in the school community.
- To define the complexity of what it means to show ally behavior and train students in these skills.
- To increase students' empathy and compassion for those who are targeted for name-calling and bullying.
- To encourage students to articulate their beliefs regarding behavior toward others and to think about intentional ways to take care of other members in their school community.

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore their own roles in incidences of bullying, harassment and name-calling.
- Students will talk about bullying, harassment and name-calling.
- Students will consider different responses to bullying behavior and how that might change depending on the situation.
- Students will discuss alternatives to ignoring bullying, harassment and name-calling.

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. (Also SL.3.1, 5.1 and 6.1)

### EDUCATORS' NOTES

This discussion with students will explore how all of us, at one time or another, have had to make a decision about whether or not we will intervene or take a stand when we witness name-calling, bullying or harassment of a friend or a stranger. Often we make these decisions in the moment, reacting to situations as they come up.

In this lesson, students take the time to explore many different situations that could be seen at school and think about how they make decisions around allyship, such as speaking up in the moment, getting help from a caring adult, talking to the person in private or walking away. This activity can be done multiple times using different situations to increase your student's ability to be an ally.

This lesson is featured in the Welcoming Schools film [\*What Can We Do? Bias, Bullying, & Bystanders\*](#) (streaming online).

### ALLY OR BYSTANDER?

**INTERVENE MYSELF**

**TALK TO THE PERSON  
IN PRIVATE**

**SEEK HELP FROM AN ADULT  
OR SOMEONE OLDER**

**IGNORE THE SITUATION  
OR WALK AWAY**

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## **MATERIALS**

- “Four Corners” placards (included in lesson) hung in the four corners of the room
- Ally or Bystander: Situation Sheet (included in lesson)
- Room arrangement suitable for activity and movement
- Chart paper

## **BEFORE THE LESSON**

- Review the list of scenarios and pick out ones that you think will generate discussion in your class or that you would like your students to consider. You could also develop your own to cover topics that may be issues in your school.
- Start with some scenarios that may be easier for your students to consider. Include some that are only slight variations so that students have to think about how things would be different if the scenario involves friends or not, students who are older or younger, students who are more popular or not, etc. Include different topics in your set of questions. You probably will have time for three to four scenarios in one class period.
- Many schools are doing this activity once or twice a month in their classrooms to provide students with ongoing opportunities to practice allyship and to strengthen their problem solving skills as individuals and school community members.
- Print out or write out and post the “Four Corners” placards in the area of your classroom where you will do the lesson. Students need to be able to move around to each “corner”.

## **ACTIVITY**

- Explain to the students that this activity looks at situations where you must decide, in that moment, how to react if you see someone being teased or bullied. Sometimes you may do something. Sometimes you may not. It often depends on the situation, how well you know someone, if they are older or younger, etc. This activity involves movement and action.
- For each situation, students will make a decision regarding how they will respond using the following four choices. Briefly discuss them to ensure that your students understand each one.
  - Ignore the situation or walk away.
  - Intervene Myself.
  - Talk to the person in private.
  - Seek help from an adult or someone older.
- Read the scenarios that you have chosen out loud to the class. Make sure your students understand the scenario, especially if it is a variation of one you just read. Ask them first to think for themselves which of the four corners they would go to. Then, have them move to the corner of the room that represents how they would act in response to that particular scenario.

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- Before you hear from students in the large group, give them one or two minutes to turn and talk to other students who chose the same corner that they did.
  - If there is only one student in a corner, go stand with that student so that they are not alone.
  - With each scenario, invite a couple of students from the different corners to say why they chose to stand in a certain corner. Follow up on their answers as appropriate. You could ask them to give an example of what they could say to the person being teased or bullied and what they could say to the person doing the hurtful teasing or bullying. Make sure to hear from students in all four corners during the lesson. As your students say why they have chosen a particular action/corner, acknowledge their reasoning.
  - To generate further discussion after you have presented the scenarios, ask some open-ended questions:
    - Did you respond differently to the different scenarios?
    - What are some of the reasons you chose one corner versus another?
    - With whom did you feel most comfortable intervening?
    - When were you more likely to ignore the situation? Why?
    - Would you respond in some other way not represented by the four corners?
  - Discuss what it means to be a bystander.
    - How do you think the person being teased feels if people don't do anything?
    - How do you feel when you don't do something?
  - Talk about what it means to be an ally. Brainstorm ways to be an ally. (If you use chart paper, you can keep it hanging on your classroom wall.)
  - Acknowledge that there are many ways to be an ally depending on the situation. The important message is that if students witness bullying behavior, they take some kind of action. If they are not sure whether to do something, this means it is a good time to talk with someone about it. Ask students to also think about if there are times they feel unsafe being an ally. What could they do in those situations?
  - In closing, ask students to think of how they could be a better ally to the other students in your class or school.

### **ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

- Can students define what it means to be an ally or bystander?
- Do you observe students sticking up for each other more?
- Can students identify ways to be an ally?

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS**

- [Children's Books to Prevent Bias-Based Bullying](#)
- [Lesson Plans to Prevent Bias-Based Bullying in School](#)
- [Preventing Bias-Based Bullying – School Resources](#)
- [Welcoming Schools Professional Development Trainings](#)

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## ALLY OR BYSTANDER — SITUATION SHEET

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This activity can be done multiple times using different prompts to increase your student's ability to be an ally. You can do 3 – 4 scenarios in a 45-minute session. Choose topics that are most relevant to your student's needs. Start with an easier one. Use ones with slight variations to make students think about how they might handle each situation differently. The situations are sorted by identity and/or topic.

**Note:** It is important to caution students not to use people's names or identify anyone when sharing. The intent is to ensure that students change hurtful practices without bringing attention to individual students who have bullied others or who have been targeted. Special thought and care will need to be taken if certain students are vulnerable due to differences or recent incidents, in order to avoid unwanted attention or discomfort for that student.

### AGE / SIZE

- A classmate or friend constantly makes fun of a another student because they are small for their age.
- An older student makes fun of a younger student because they are small for their age.
- At recess, you hear two other students calling your friend “fatty.”
- A friend of yours teases another student because their pants are too small.

### GENDER EXPRESSION / GENDER IDENTITY

- When you are with a group of friends, one of them makes fun of a younger student because of the way they dress.
- A friend of yours keeps saying to other boys, “Hey, stop acting like a girl.”
- A boy in your school that you don't know very well keeps saying to other boys, “Hey, stop acting like a girl.”
- A friend in your class teases a younger boy for having a teddy bear or a doll.
- A student in your class teases a boy for wearing a pink t-shirt and nail polish.
- A girl in your class teases another girl for always dressing like a boy.
- A friend of yours keeps asking a new student if they are a boy or a girl.

### RACE / ETHNICITY / CULTURAL IDENTITY

- A new kid at school calls your friend a bad name because of their skin color.
- A friend of yours calls a new kid at school a bad name because of their skin color.
- A kid you don't know calls another kid you don't know a bad name because of their skin color.
- You hear another classmate tease a new student about what they are wearing. The student is wearing traditional clothing from their home country.
- You see two students making fun of another child's school lunch because it has food that is different from what their family eats.

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## **DISABILITY**

- A friend of yours teases another student for not being in the same math group.
- You see two kids making fun of another student because they are reading “baby books.”
- You notice that a student in a wheelchair is not included in basketball or four square during recess.
- You notice that no one picks a certain student for their team during physical education because they have trouble moving quickly.

## **WHO YOU LOVE / FAMILIES**

- A new kid at school calls your friend “gay.”
- A group of students your age keeps saying “that’s gay” to mean they don’t like something.
- A group of students your age keeps saying “that’s gay” to mean they don’t like something, and you know that your friend’s dads are gay.
- Your classmate has two moms, and you hear a child ask them which one is their real mom.
- You hear a classmate ask another student, “Why do you have such a big family?”
- You hear a classmate ask another student, “Why don’t the people in your family match?”

## **SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL**

- You see two kids making fun of another child because they eat school lunch.
- You hear a child acting shocked that another student’s family doesn’t own a computer.
- A classmate makes a negative comment about the old car someone’s parents drive.

## **MULTILINGUALISM / HOME LANGUAGE**

- You see two kids making fun of/copying another student’s accent/way of talking.
- A friend of yours angrily tells another student that they should go back where they came from.

## **RELIGION**

- Someone in your class says something mean to another student in your school because of their religion.
- A kid you don’t know is asking another student why they don’t celebrate a certain holiday.
- You see two kids making fun of another student for the clothing that their family wears that is part of their religious expression. (Examples: hijab, yarmulke)

**NOTE:** Include any others that might apply to your school or community.

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OR WALK AWAY**

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