

TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

Responsible Reporting Vs Tattling / Dobbing

Young people's healthy development is heavily dependent on good, positive relationships, and in turn, healthy personal growth is a critical component for the development of young people's positive relationships. Irrespective of one's life stage, relationships are central for each individual's social, emotional and cognitive growth and wellbeing. However, conflict is a natural part of human existence and relationships with others.

- If not handled well, conflict can cause unhappiness and distress.
- By understanding the nature of conflict, it is possible to shape it into a potentially positive force in relationships.

Making sense of conflict, and equipping students with the knowledge and skills to effectively deal with conflict when it arises, contributes to student wellbeing. The following diagram illustrates an example of a conflict situation and the roles that individuals can potentially 'play' as **victims**, **bullies** and **bystanders**.

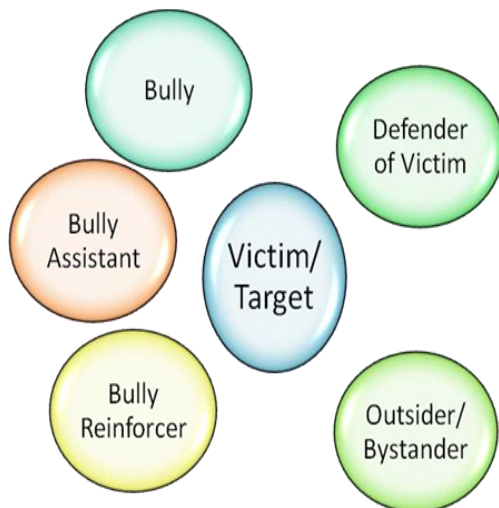


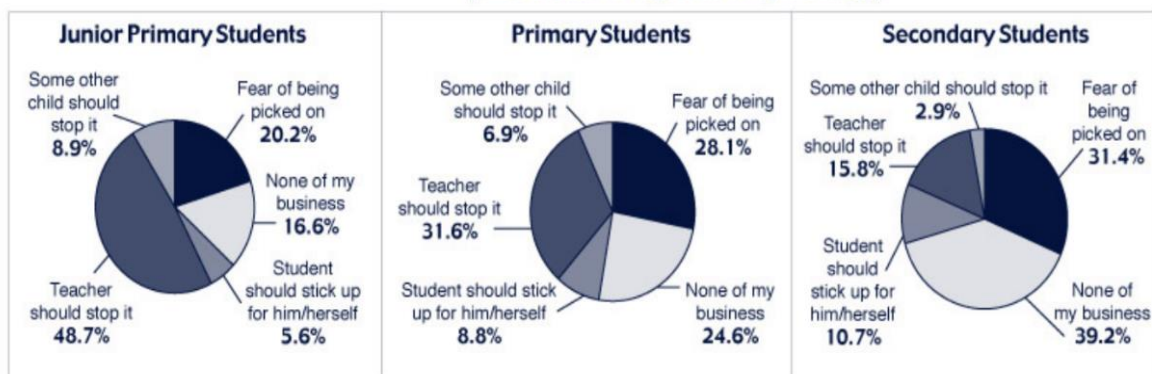
Figure 1. Roles played in bullying (Slee, 2017)

As highlighted in the diagram, during an episode of bullying, different roles can be identified. These include the:

- **Victim**
- **Protagonist/s (the bully/ies)**
- **Bystanders** (who may play different roles, including participating in the bullying and even reinforcing the behaviour.)
- **Defenders/Upstanders** (those who actively speak up against the behaviour)

It is important to help students to distinguish between **Responsible Reporting** and **Tattling** ('dobbing') when students don't display upstander behaviour, for fear of being labelled a 'snitch'. This can lead to students being socially excluded and unfairly labelled.

Figure 2. Students' Opinions About What Would Stop Students Helping a Student Being Bullied (n = 5529 students expressed as a percentage).



Possible Discussion Questions

1. How do junior primary, primary and secondary school students differ in relation to what would stop them from helping another student who was being victimised?
2. What are the implications of these differences for school programs for reducing bullying?

Figure 2. Research (e.g. Slee, 2017) has identified various reasons why students will not step in to help others.

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Younger students believe it is a teacher's job to step in and help another student in a conflict situation. Primary school students highlight the fear of retaliation for reporting an incident, as well as the expectation that a teacher will step in. In secondary school, students will emphasise that they usually won't step in to help another student because "it is none of my business". These findings highlight the developmental reasons associated with why a student will not report on behalf of another.

It is important for teachers to work with students to set up a safe space for learning. This means establishing a friendly and respectful atmosphere in which students and teachers feel safe to explore topics, raise questions and share views without fear of judgement or being silenced.

It is important to involve students in identifying or reviewing the rules and expectations needed, to maximise participation and learning.

Responsible Reporting Vs Tattling/ dobbing– Have students generate their own ideas in pairs/small groups to share with the class about the difference between tattling/ dobbing and responsible reporting. Teachers can use the following notes to guide the discussion.

Tattling/ Dobbing /Snitching - Getting someone in trouble

- The behaviour being reported is an accident.
- The behaviour being reported is harmless.
- The behaviour being reported can be solved on its own. Have you tried to solve it?
- The behaviour being reported is not generally important.
- The behaviour being reported has already been solved.

Responsible Reporting – Getting someone out of trouble

- By reporting the behaviour, you are keeping someone safe.
- By reporting the behaviour, you are helping someone in need.
- The negative behaviour being reported is intentional and 'on purpose'.
- The negative behaviour being reported has hurt someone or has the potential to harm someone.
- The victim, or defender of the victim, may need help from an adult to solve the problem.
- The negative behaviour has occurred a number of times. Could the action occur again tomorrow?

Ask the students to come up with their own definitions of **Responsible Reporting** or **Dobbing/ Tattling/ Snitching**. The following examples can be used by the teacher to further explore and resolve the issue.

Green Light Problem

Green light problems are not a concern at all. Kids can solve 'Green Light Problems' on their own with little effort or by 'getting on with things' and ignoring the slight problem.

Examples: Someone accidentally bumps into you.

I didn't get picked when my hand was raised.

Yellow Light Problem

Yellow light problems are not a major concern, but students will need to slow down and think about the issue before they can solve it. These are problems that students can generally solve on their own. They may even ask a friend for advice.

Examples: My friend said something mean about me.

Someone is cheating in the game we're playing.

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Red Light Problem

Red means stop! Red light problems are important and are concerning to both students. They require adult guidance to solve them. These are problems that students should not try to solve on their own, and they should not be ignored. **These behaviours are definitely Responsible Reporting not Tattling/Dobbing.**

Examples: Two classmates are actively fighting on the playground.

Classmates are saying mean and hurtful things about me online.

Suggested activity: Create a poster to be displayed in the classroom that shares class definitions.

Responsible Reporting is Upstander Behaviour

Scenario

Year 4 student Michael is being targeted with bullying behaviour while travelling on the school bus. You hear laughing on the bus where Michael is sitting. When you enter the bus, you see some students from another school making comments to Michael. They are mean and hurtful comments. The next day you see some peers from Michael's class start to join in on the comments. You have seen Michael ask them to stop a number of times. The next day on the bus the students from the other school see you watching and yell out 'You had better not snitch on us!'

What would you do? Ask yourself - Is it Responsible Reporting or Tattling/Dobbing ?

Watch

Bullying is Never OK. (3.18) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6r0B78GQgg>

Discussion

Discuss with students the issue of bullying in relation to responsible reporting.

Professional Development: Discussion point for teachers – 'Equity Versus Equality'

Equality in education means providing the same resources for everyone, whereas **equity** requires us to take into account each student's individual needs and provide tailored support accordingly.

Discuss with colleagues how this issue relates to that of responsible reporting.

Acknowledgement: The Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools Office