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Chapter 3
Proactive Policies and Practices

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Evidence for proactive school policies and practices

Proactive policies and practices

Schools with clear and consistent policy and procedures send a strong message to the whole-school community, about the school's beliefs and actions to support a safe and supportive school environment. It provides the school with a framework to guide school action for the prevention, early response and case management of bullying. School policies should be promoted to the whole-school community, particularly at times of higher risk such as orientation and transition. Positive student behaviour should be encouraged and rewarded at the whole-school level.

International research has found school policy and procedures are important in reducing bullying. The development of a clear and consistent policy provides a basis for action and behaviour change throughout the school community. Active consultation should be sought with all members of the school community including teaching staff, non-teaching staff, students, parents and the wider community. Establishing clear policy and practice is the first step in managing bullying within a school. This chapter provides information, guidelines and strategies to engage schools in discussion and planning toward a whole-school response to bullying.
While an international review of 50 school-based bullying prevention studies found one of the program elements associated with a reduction in being bullied was the presence of a formal school anti-bullying policy,\textsuperscript{4} the presence of a bullying policy alone will not lead to reduced bullying. Policies need to be developed with the involvement of students, staff and families,\textsuperscript{118} promoted to the whole-school community, implemented consistently and monitored to be effective.

**Promotion of the policy to students, staff and families**

The promotion of the school policy and procedures to reduce bullying appears to be especially important during times of orientation and transition to school. There are many different structures in schools and each school may have differing periods of transition. All schools will have a year when most students first begin at their school which is an obvious time of transition. Consider other transition points that occur throughout school, such as when students move from junior to middle school to senior school, or times when the school has a large intake year (this may differ from transition years). There may only be a small number of students transitioning in an intake year (Year 10, for example), however, this may make the group more at risk due to the well-established dynamics within the peer group.

Several studies have observed a peak in bullying following student transition from primary to secondary school.\textsuperscript{112,184} In 2005-2007 the CHPRC developed and evaluated the Supportive Schools Project to enhance the capacity of secondary schools to develop and implement a whole-school bullying reduction intervention, including strategies to enhance student transition to secondary school. Results from the project indicated the intervention reduced regular bullying behaviour among students, reduced their sense of loneliness at school, improved their perceptions of school safety, and, if they were bullied, improved their perception of staff and peer support.\textsuperscript{118} A key component of the Supportive Schools Project was the development of whole-school policy involving the school community and its active promotion to students, their parents and staff, and consistent implementation by staff, especially with the Year 7 cohort of students and their parents, prior to, and following, their transition to secondary school.

Interestingly, given the National Safe Schools Framework requires schools to develop and implement policy to address bullying, harassment and violence, a study conducted in 2007 (the *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study*)\textsuperscript{123} found 25 per cent of the school staff surveyed were unsure whether they had a school policy that addressed bullying and less than 10 per cent of staff reported there was no bullying policy at their school. Given the government requirements, it seems that at least some schools have a policy that is not actively and regularly promoted to the whole-school community.

**Responding to bullying**

Clear and consistent procedures for reporting and managing bullying need to be outlined in school policies. Of particular importance is the action staff members are required to take when a student reports being bullied and the outcomes of these staff actions for students. The procedures a school uses to respond to bullying need to be described and communicated clearly to the school community to ensure consistent implementation. Communication of the behavioural expectations and consequences of poor behaviour is essential so all members of the school community are aware of the actions that will be taken.

Smith and Shu (2000) found that of those students who told a teacher they were bullied, approximately 80 per cent reported the teacher had attempted to stop the bullying, while the remainder indicated the teachers had taken no action.\textsuperscript{118} Students reported teachers successfully stopped the bullying in 27 per cent of cases, and were able to reduce the level of bullying a student was experiencing in approximately 29 per cent of cases. Students reported that in just over a quarter of the bullying cases, the bullying behaviour did not change and in 16 per cent of cases the bullying increased.\textsuperscript{118} This study found there was no significant
reduction in bullying experienced by students when they told their teachers about the bullying, compared to when students told their family about the bullying.

Similarly, an Australian study found that when students reported being bullied, school personnel, including teachers and counsellors, were the group least likely to be told.\textsuperscript{[187]} Recent evidence suggests that students who are cyberbullied are less likely to tell adults compared to when they are bullied by non-cyber methods.\textsuperscript{[188]} Further, Rigby (2002) found older students are less likely to have positive outcomes, with approximately 50 per cent of senior secondary school students (aged 16-17) reporting no change in their bullying situation after reporting the bullying to teachers.\textsuperscript{[187]} To encourage more students to seek support or help, they need to feel confident their disclosure of bullying will: be addressed appropriately and discreetly by school staff; will not exacerbate the bullying situation; and that staff will listen to how students would like the situation to be resolved.

- School staff may be unsure of what action to take when bullying is reported to them, especially with cyberbullying, where teachers report even more uncertainty as to how to address this behaviour\textsuperscript{[12]} and are also less likely to intervene in situations of covert bullying.\textsuperscript{[189-193]} School staff report they have less confidence responding to covert bullying, including cyberbullying, than verbal and physical bullying; they are unsure if it is their duty to intervene and the best action to take.\textsuperscript{[191]}

- In the \textit{Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study} over half of the teachers surveyed (57 per cent) reported their school had whole-school bullying prevention strategies in place that were moderately or very effective in reducing covert bullying.\textsuperscript{[12]} The study found that while 39 per cent of teachers had knowledge of their school’s bullying policy that addressed covert bullying, 28 per cent reported their school had a bullying policy that did not include explicit reference to covert bullying (including cyberbullying).

- Easy to access reporting procedures such as online reporting and appropriate follow-up by school staff are more likely to encourage students to report bullying.

\textbf{Punitive vs non-punitive approaches}

A large proportion of school staff (71 per cent) justify the use of punitive approaches to address bullying, with considerable disagreement over which strategies should be used to work with the student who is engaging in the bullying and the student who is being bullied.\textsuperscript{[194]} The effectiveness of punishment as a means to address bullying in schools has many potential limitations that have a basis in psychological theory:\textsuperscript{[194]}

- Punishment may only suppress behaviour temporarily, rather than in the longer-term.

- The effectiveness of punitive approaches is dependent on how the student responds to the consequence (in some cases, suspensions may be desired by students). Often suspensions have little or no link to the behaviour which invoked this form of consequence, making the learning from the suspension of less value.

- Punishment applied towards a student who is engaging in bullying others who feels undeserving of the punishment, may inspire the students to feel resentful and act spitefully, such as in cases where there are provocative victims involved.

- Punishment for bullying behaviour may lead students to resort to more covert forms of bullying, which are less detectable by adults.

- If students receive approval by peers for their inappropriate bullying behaviour, this is likely to outweigh the disapproval (and punishment) by the school, which then influences their subsequent behaviour.
According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, discipline in schools should respect children’s dignity. While the Farrington and Ttofi (2009) meta-analysis found some support for the use of firm sanctions, the effectiveness of this long-term is unknown. However, the use of punitive approaches is almost certain to be harmful to the school climate and students’ perception of safety at school, and is contrary to valuing students as active participants of the school community, and encouraging student voice in all aspects of the school’s functioning. Moreover, rewarding positive behaviour rather than punishing poor behaviour is related to decreased student discipline problems (including bullying).

Punitive responses to bullying seem even less useful in cases of cyberbullying. Students often fail to report instances of cyberbullying to adults for fear the technology will be taken away from them, causing social isolation which could further complicate their experiences. Banning the use of such technologies in, or out of, school is unlikely to eradicate the problem as the effects of cyberbullying infiltrate the school environment. Furthermore, students’ high rates of mobile phone usage mean students can access websites outside of the school network and privacy filters. Kajs (2006) suggests firm and inflexible disciplinary sanctions against bullying such as zero tolerance policies, don’t take into account relevant explanations for student infractions. This research suggests the disciplinary sanctions applied should be appropriate to the offence and age of students, and should not create additional barriers to resolving the original issue. Constructive responses to inappropriate student behaviours (such as bullying) should be applied fairly and consistently, and with administrator discretion, to promote a policy of fairness and respect. School disciplinary responses should also seek to teach students how to constructively resolve social problems to prevent similar incidents in the future.

CHPRC research and research conducted by Rigby and Bauman (2009) has found the Support Group Method and the Method of Shared Concern to be promising in resolving some cases of bullying. Other methods, such as Motivational Interviewing traditionally used to treat drug use problems and eating disorders, may also be effective in changing the behaviour of students who regularly engage in bullying behaviours. Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 describe the types of conversations that comprise these techniques. It should be noted the Method of Shared Concern and the Support Group Method are best used with perpetrators who have some capacity for empathy whereas Motivational Interviewing is useful for students who have other motivations for their bullying behaviour.
Actions for developing proactive policies and practices

Strategies for good practice: Proactive policies and practices

1. Schools with clear and consistent policy and procedures for practice send a strong message to the whole-school community about the school’s beliefs and actions to encourage a safe and supportive school environment.

2. Proactive policies provide a framework to guide school action for the prevention, early response and case management of bullying.

3. School policies are promoted to the whole-school community, particularly at times of higher student risk such as during orientation and transition.

School policies that are developed and implemented to reduce bullying behaviour can sometimes be complex, because effectively addressing student bullying behaviour is a complex problem. However, if the school community is to understand and consistently act in accordance with the school’s behavioural expectations related to preventing and discouraging bullying, then these policies need to be simple and accessible to all. This doesn’t just mean the policies are available on the school website or in student diaries, it also means they are easy to understand and implement. Most importantly everyone, especially students, clearly knows and understands the standard of behaviours the school expects. This clarity also encourages consistency on the part of staff that are required to implement these policies. Clear policies that encourage positive behaviour also build on the responsibilities and rights of students to meet the normative expectations of the school community.

Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.4 discusses the importance of establishing a clear vision statement, while Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.5 outlines a policy review process to assist schools in developing and/or reviewing their behaviour expectations policy to include clear and consistent policy and procedures for a safe and supportive school environment.
Proactive policies provide a framework to guide school action for the prevention, early response and case management of bullying.

Preparing the school community to actively work together to resolve incidents of bullying behaviour when they occur can be considered in three phases: pre-event, event and post-event.

Pre-event

The following points may be considered when preparing an early response:

- **There is a common understanding of what bullying and cyberbullying is** and an understanding about the range of behaviours so staff, students, families and school community members can identify these behaviours.
- **There are clear procedures** and a variety of methods for staff, students, families and school community members to report bullying and cyberbullying behaviour, incorporating both online and offline reporting mechanisms.
- **There is a common understanding among all school community members**, including students, staff, family members and the broader community, that any reports of bullying and/or cyberbullying will be taken seriously and actions as per the school policy will result.

*Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.5* discusses how these points can be incorporated in behaviour expectations policies.

Event

Each situation is unique; there will be individual circumstances surrounding the event as well as those involved in the bullying event. Each incident will need to be assessed and the severity and impact of the situation used to determine the level of intervention required for both the victimised student and the student engaging in the bullying behaviour. *Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.6* is an example of one way in which you could think about how you assess harm in your school.

A response to the event that supports all involved can include:

- inviting all those involved with the incident (the student(s) who was bullying others; the student being bullied, bystanders and so on) to discuss the incident. Strategies such as the Co-LATE Model may be used for these discussions as demonstrated in *Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.7*.
- helping all the students involved to express their feelings about the incident by being approachable and non-judgemental
- talking about which behaviour expectations have been broken and what harm has been done
- discussing strategies for making amends and stopping the bullying from occurring again.

Formalised reporting is critical when addressing bullying incidences. Ensure all staff members are aware of the reporting mechanisms outlined within the policy and that these are followed through. Reporting may include:

- writing a report on the student's record
- informing families involved of the situation
- informing other teaching staff (form or other class teachers) who need to be made aware
- informing the school administration team
- informing the boarding house staff.
Consequences for breaking school rules can be applied according to the severity of the situation. Consequences are most appropriate when closely linked to the action which invoked the consequence, for example, if the misdemeanour occurred when using technology. These may include:

- a formal apology
- loss of social privileges such as spending time with friends during break times
- school community service
- in-school exclusion including case management
- separate meetings with staff, families and students involved in the bullying situation
- accurate summaries/descriptions of all discussions are recorded and placed in student files.

Post-event

Monitoring the effectiveness of a response strategy after each incident and ensuring this monitoring is recorded and tracked as a part of the school record management system, is essential given more than half of students who were bullied reported that the situation got worse or did not improve after reporting it to teachers. Follow-up sessions need to gather information from:

- students directly involved
- bystanders
- any staff involved
- families.

Case management for students persistently involved in bullying

Case management is provided to students who have a history of being involved in bullying or who need support to maintain their role in a safe and supportive school environment. A clear case management plan may include:

- a problem solving approach for those involved in the incident
- follow-up to ensure the longer-term safety of the student who is bullied and the occurrence of change
- procedures to inform and involve families when appropriate
- clear recording of incidents through formalised procedures
- clear ongoing monitoring mechanisms
- referring students to other support services, such as psychologists external to the school, when necessary.
School policies are promoted to the whole-school community, particularly at times of higher student risk such as during orientation and transition.

Orientation of new staff, students and parents is an ideal time to disseminate the policy. This ensures that everyone arriving in the school has a copy and a good understanding of the policy and the vision of a safe and supportive school environment. Effective strategies, suggested by schools involved in CHPRC research, to raise awareness about their bullying policy are outlined in *Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.5* and could include:

**Staff:**
- discussions and awareness raising of policy at staff meetings
- offering training to staff in the implementation of the policy and strategies to address bullying
- using professional learning time to provide a thorough overview of current research and successful practices to ensure everyone has the same capacity and there are consistent understandings
- provide opportunities to show teachers who have not been involved in implementing the classroom curriculum what has and is being done
- inducting new teachers by ensuring they receive a copy of the bullying policy.

**Students:**
- discussions and awareness raising of policy during assemblies (see *Supportive School Culture Toolkit 2.2*)
- discussions and learning activities addressing bullying in classes (see *Key Understandings and Competencies Toolkit 4.1*)
- having teachers draw attention to the bullying policy during their discussions of classroom policies with their students.

**Parents and the wider community:**
- issuing the bullying policy to all families at the start of the year
- discussing the bullying policy at parent nights
- utilising newsletter items for promotion of the policy to parents and the wider community (see *Supportive School Culture Toolkit 2.2*)
- displaying posters developed as part of the curriculum in every teaching area
- introducing the policy at P&C meetings for parents and the wider community.
Summary

This chapter has outlined the importance of consistent policy and practice for the reduction and prevention of bullying behaviours. This existence of clear and consistent policy, practice and procedures sends a strong message to the whole-school community about the school’s beliefs and actions to encourage a safe and supportive school environment. In addition, proactive policies provide a framework for the prevention, early response and case management of bullying behaviour. School policies need to be promoted throughout the whole-school community to ensure a shared understanding and consistent response to bullying behaviours.

Two school stories are included with this chapter to demonstrate how CHPRC research schools have sought to implement proactive policies and practices. In addition, eight toolkits are included to assist schools to take proactive action in developing and/or reviewing policies and practice for the reduction of bullying behaviour:

- Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkits 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 describe the Method of Shared Concern, the Support Group Method and Motivational Interviewing, respectively, as strategies schools may use to resolve bullying situations.
- Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.4 is included to assist with the identification of a school's vision statement and associated guiding principles, while Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.5 provides advice regarding the policy review process. In particular, information about which policies may need to be developed/reviewed, what needs to be included in these policies, and reviewing and implementing these policies, has been included.
- Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.6 provides a framework for assisting schools in preparing the whole-school community to resolve bullying incidents.
- Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.7 describes the Co-LATE model, a strategy suited for use by all members of the school community in acknowledging and supporting the reporting of bullying behaviours.

Throughout this chapter, reference was made to toolkits located in other chapters of this book. These may further assist schools to develop and/or review policies and practices relating to behaviour expectations and the prevention of bullying behaviour.
Brief background to school initiative

The school had a philosophy of openness about bullying and introduced clear processes for student complaints and peer support. The school developed pastoral curriculum learning programs to address myths surrounding bullying. The principal prompted action when he reinvigorated a ‘no put down’ program.

School Profile

- Metropolitan non-government boys school
- Years: K-12
- 895 students
- This school has a significant boarding school population and a large number of students of Asian descent.

Action

The school believed that bullying should not be a hidden issue. They wanted to dispel the conspiracy of silence by increasing awareness and understanding of the behaviour. The school created an advice pamphlet for families and students that outlined what bullying was, how parents could spot the signs, information for siblings and friends, how the school could be contacted, and the school’s response to bullying. During a term length anti-bullying program, conducted within the pastoral curriculum, students asked an adult about their experiences of bullying, particularly when they were at school. The responses were recorded, used for discussion and compiled in a learning resource.

The school believed that only punishing students who engaged in bullying could make matters worse. Students who bullied also needed help, coming to terms with different ways to behave or through building an understanding of the effects of their actions. The school decided that in the first instance students who bullied would not be punished. The initial action was conciliatory and non-punitive, encouraging an ‘okay to tell’ atmosphere, partnership between parents and the school and the development of social responsibility. The school’s primary concern was to protect the person being bullied. Initially, the school worked separately with both the student being bullied and the student bullying to find a solution to the conflict. Incidents of bullying were recorded, including the date, time, place and nature of the incident, the students involved, the follow-up action, and the name of the person who made the report. The records were reviewed on a weekly basis and recurring names were noted. Students who were named frequently were interviewed and counselled and their parents were informed. The school’s priority was to stop bullying at an early stage, rather than waiting until it became serious enough for students engaging in bullying to be punished.

Peer support was used as an educative tool to promote positive values and relationships. Year 11 students volunteered to act as group leaders to small groups of Year 8 students. The program gave all senior students opportunities for self-development. They developed communication and leadership skills and a greater awareness of their own abilities. Juniors were provided with a supportive environment, security and friendship.
All implemented strategies were evaluated using pre- and post-event surveys. The school collected informal comments from teachers, parents and the school council, revealing that a significant change in behaviour and attitude had been achieved, as well as a significant reduction in the amount and type of bullying behaviour.

**What we learnt**

**Difficulties encountered**

It was difficult to sustain the initial impetus of the program. Changes in staff were particularly detrimental to maintaining the program's momentum.

**Overcoming difficulties**

Bullying was an ongoing issue. The school needed to remain vigilant in its response to the issue and maintain communication between parents, students and staff.

**If we could do it over**

A change in administration unfortunately resulted in a loss of momentum. The school would have liked greater parental involvement earlier in the process.

**Recommendations for other schools**

Ensure that the administration and parents are fully committed to the program. To facilitate this there needs to be an emphasis on educating staff and parents on the impact that bullying and harassment has on a child's life. The school must commit to a short-, mid-, and long-term plan as it takes years to achieve a cultural change. Funding is essential, as such a whole-school approach requires additional resources and staffing, including bringing in external expertise.

**More information about the strategies used by this school can be found in the following toolkits:**

- Supportive School Culture Toolkit 2.3
- Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.1
- Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.2
- Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.3
- Chapter 4, Key Understandings and Competencies
- Key Understandings and Competencies Toolkit 4.2
Background to school initiative

When the principal arrived at this school there was a hostile atmosphere. There was an oppositional culture and a general feeling of teachers versus students on the playground. There was also an expectation from parents of severe punishment for their children in any instance in which they were contacted by the school.

School profile

- Metropolitan primary school
- 680 students
- Years: K-7
- This was generally a low socioeconomic area with a high proportion of Aboriginal students and some Maori students. This was not necessarily a factor in the strategies used, but racial taunts were something that teachers and staff wanted to address.

Action

The school adopted a proactive stance toward behaviour management, aiming to minimise reactive strategies. The school exposed its students to practices that develop a sense of self-respect and a clear understanding of the school motto: ‘Care, Respect, Trust’. To facilitate ownership, the students were involved in the creation and the design of the new motto.

To promote team spirit within the school a challenge was created. Tokens in each of the four faction colours were used by teachers, assistants and administration personnel to reward positive behaviour. Each fortnight the winning faction was announced at assembly and received ten minutes extra recess time. A raffle was also conducted during assembly, with five names being drawn at random and the winners receiving an ice-cream. At the end of each term the most successful faction had their name placed on a memorial shield. To culminate the challenge, if all factions met a pre-determined quota of tokens each term together, everyone received a small prize. The challenge, therefore, rewarded students at the whole-school, faction and individual levels.

To further recognise and reward positive behaviour, students were rewarded with a special event at the end of each school term, known as Reward Days. All students were invited to attend provided that they have not received more than two detentions during the current term. However, negotiations occurred if detentions were received early in the term and/or it is apparent the student has demonstrated considerable improvement in behaviour and attitude.

Games trolleys were used to reward individual classes for positive classroom behaviour. The school purchased numerous high quality children’s board games and puzzles. The school handyman adapted some old trolleys to house a range of children’s board games and puzzles. Each class is challenged to earn five reward cards from their teacher and one each from each teaching specialist for positive classroom behaviour. If the class achieved this goal they were allowed to use the games trolley for half a day.

A buddy class (big buddies, little buddies) program operated at the school. This program consisted of twice weekly class visits by Year 1s and Year 4/5s. Half of one class would go to the other class (two sets of mix/visit) and shared activities, such as making/building things and/or playing games. This was organised between class teachers.
The school encouraged and promoted a ‘working with parents’ ethos. This school emphasised the importance of being aware of the family and cultural attitudes of the district. They found that parents sometimes encouraged retaliation and physical fighting and that weekend conflicts were spilling into the school environment. The school encouraged parents to resolve problems through the school rather than approach other students’ parents or the student themselves. The school encouraged parents to trust that bullying and behavioural management issues would be dealt with and that it was not up to individual parents to ‘settle the score’ with students who were bullying others, or their parents.

The school encouraged teachers and administrators to act as role models and avoid engaging in bullying behaviour themselves. The school considered it important for the school community to know that the principal and teachers did not bully others. The school’s ethos statement reinforced that all students and parents have the right to talk and share each other’s point of view.

A mid-year survey revealed the school and teachers scored a high rate of approval among parents, who were confident that the school/principal/teachers were ‘firm but fair’. The survey showed that parents trusted the school and teachers much more than they previously did and understood that the school would deal with any negative behaviour. Staff attitudes also changed positively with regard to discipline. In the past, teachers had the attitude that, because it was a big school, student behaviour was going to be hard to manage. Now the problem is not seen as being the large school size, but the relationships. There is an emphasis on promoting friendly, respectful behaviour towards people from all parts of the school community including administration, teachers, general staff and students.

What we learnt

Difficulties encountered

Teachers, staff and parents accepted bullying as part of the school environment. Year 6 and 7 students had experienced hostility from older students when they were in lower years and had developed an attitude that it was their turn to ‘dominate’ the younger students in the school.

Overcoming difficulties

The school believed in the selection of local staff, as well as ensuring that new staff members were right for the school. The school ethos was an important first step in establishing this supportive school culture.

By concentrating on the attitude of the lower primary students, the school was able to ensure that the hostile attitude of the older students did not influence the younger year groups, thus interrupting the cycle of negative behaviour. Many problems were overcome through the promotion of positive behaviour from both staff and students. When teachers set an example of a comfortable, happy working environment, this filtered through to teacher-student relationships and to student-student relationships.
More information about the strategies used by this school can be found in the following toolkits:

- Supportive School Culture Toolkit 2.3
- Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.4
- Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.5
- Key Understandings and Competencies Toolkit 4.2
- School-Family-Community Partnerships 6.2
- School-Family-Community Partnerships 6.3
- School-Family-Community Partnerships 6.5
Toolkits for action

Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.1
This information has been modified from the Method of Shared Concern originally developed by Anatol Pikas.

The Method of Shared Concern

Description

The Method of Shared Concern aims to change the behaviour of students involved in bullying incidents and to improve the situation for the students being bullied. The method employs a non-punitive, non-blaming and non-aggressive approach to individual and group discussion of the incidents. Each student involved in the bullying incident participates in a series of individual discussions with a staff member. Clearly defined steps are used to reach a point where the student/s bullying agrees that the student being bullied is having a difficult time. The student/s who are bullying are then encouraged to suggest and try ways to help to improve the situation for the student being bullied. The student being bullied is also provided with opportunities to discuss the incident and encouraged to consider ways they can improve their own situation.\textsuperscript{201, 202}

Key points

- This method is used only if the student/s who are bullying have capacity for empathic responses to the person they have bullied.
- Those involved in a bullying situation are seen individually.
- The facilitator/teacher shares his or her concern for what is happening with the student being bullied.
- The facilitator/teacher invites and supports the students who are bullying to take responsibility and suggest actions to remedy the situation.
- The students are carefully monitored.

Consultation with the school community and formalisation of this response to bullying and other methods in the whole-school bullying policy, helps to enhance ownership by the school community and enables a consistent and effective staff response to bullying incidents.

While the Method of Shared Concern appears useful as an action to support students who are bullied, to be successful in the longer-term it is important that it be embedded within a whole-school approach to bullying prevention.

A brief outline and scripts that may be used to guide a Method of Shared Concern session with a student who is bullying others and with a student who is being bullied are provided in this toolkit.

Further reading:

Meeting with the student who has been bullying others

Step 1
'I have asked you to come and speak with me because I have heard that some things have been happening to 'X' and this is making 'X' very unhappy at school.'

- Wait for the student to respond.
- If the student doesn’t respond ask, 'Do you know anything about this that might help me?'
- Do not try to force the student to 'own up' or admit to their involvement; simply try to encourage them to acknowledge that there is a situation which is making 'X' unhappy.
- If the student complains about 'X', don’t question, just let the student explain the situation.

Step 2
'So it sounds like 'X' is having a bit of a tough time.'

- Wait for the student to respond.
- As soon as the student agrees and acknowledges that 'X' is having a bad time and is unhappy, move to Step 3.
- If the student says that 'X' is to blame, accept the point but suggest that 'X' is still having a bad time and is unhappy.

Step 3
'Well, I was wondering what you could do to help improve the situation for 'X' to help them become happier at school.'

- Accept any suggestions with positive feedback.
- Don’t question suggestions if they are positive.
- If the suggestions are negative, ask the student whether they think this would help 'X' feel happier.
- If the student can’t think of anything to do or is resistant to the idea, ask them to take some time to think about something they could do to help make 'X' feel happier, then move to Step 4.

Step 4
'Okay, I'll see you next week to find out how you are getting on.'

- If the student had an idea then say you will see them to 'discuss how your idea went when you tried it.'
- If they didn’t have an idea then say you will see them to 'discuss the idea you have come up with.'
Meeting with the student who has been bullied

Step 1
'I have asked you to come and speak with me because I have heard that some things have been happening to you that are making you unhappy at school.'

• Wait for the child to respond.
• Let the student explain the situation. Then simply acknowledge that there is a situation, which is making the student unhappy.

Step 2
'So it sounds like you are having a bit of a tough time.'

• Wait for the student to respond.
• As soon as the student agrees and acknowledges, go to Step 3.

Step 3 (a)
'I have spoken to a few students about your situation and they have made some good suggestions to help you feel happier and safer at school.'

• If the student is concerned about this reassure them that you will be keeping a close eye on what is happening.
• Let the student know that there may be a few changes in some of the students' behaviour towards them.
• If you feel the student could help the situation by changing some of their own behaviours go to Step 3(b).

Step 3 (b)
'I was wondering what you could do to help improve the situation for yourself and help you to become happier at school.'

• Accept any suggestions with positive feedback.
• Don’t question suggestions if they are positive.
• If the suggestions are negative, ask the student whether they think this would help them feel happier.
• If the student can’t think of anything to do or is resistant to the idea ask them to take some time to think about something he or she could do to help to feel happier, and then move to Step 4.

Step 4
'Okay, I'll see you next week or sooner if you would like to see me, to find out how you are getting on.'

• If the student had an idea then say you will see them to 'discuss how your idea went when you tried it.'
• If the student didn’t have an idea then say you will see them to 'discuss the idea you have come up with.'
Support Group Method

This technique aims to encourage students who are bullied and students who bully others to work together to try to decide on a mutually agreeable way to deal with the bullying.

Key points

- This method is best used when the facilitator/teacher feels that the students bullying, as well as the students who are bullied, want the bullying to stop.
- The facilitator/teacher who intervenes avoids blaming anyone for the problem.

This approach works best in less serious cases of bullying when the students who are bullied and the students who bully may have previously been friends but this friendship has ended. It is unlikely to work if the students who bully are picking on students they don’t know or care about, and if the patterns of bullying are so well-established that the bullying itself has become a reward for the students who bully. CHPRC research has found this method to be most effective when bullying occurs within a social group, particularly girls, who are having friendship difficulties (for example, exclusion and teasing). By developing empathy for the feelings of the person being bullied, the groups are able to resolve this behaviour and determine ways to prevent it from reoccurring.

When bullying has been observed or reported the following steps can be taken:

Step 1

*Interview with the person being bullied*

When the facilitator/teacher finds out that bullying has occurred they begin the process by talking to the student being bullied about their feelings. The teacher does not question them about the incident but does need to know who was involved.

Step 2

*Convene a meeting with the people involved*

The facilitator/teacher arranges to meet with the student/s who have been involved. This will include some bystanders who joined in but did not initiate any bullying.

Step 3

*Explain the problem*

The facilitator/teacher talks about the way the person being bullied is feeling and might use a piece of writing or a drawing to emphasise their distress. At no time does the teacher discuss the details of the incidents or assign blame to the group.
Step 4

Share responsibility

The facilitator/teacher does not attribute blame but states that they know the group is responsible and can do something about it.

Step 5

Ask the group for their ideas

Each member of the group is encouraged to suggest a way in which the person being bullied could be helped to feel happier. The facilitator/teacher gives some positive responses but does not go on to extract a promise of improved behaviour.

Step 6

Leave it up to them

The facilitator/teacher ends the meeting by passing over the responsibility to the group to solve the problem and arranges to meet them again to see how things are going.

Step 7

Meet them again

About a week later the facilitator/teacher discusses with each student, including the person being bullied, how things have been going. This allows the teacher to monitor the bullying and keeps everyone involved in the process.

Further reading:

- Smith, P.K., Howard, S. and Thompson, F., Use of the Support Group Method to Tackle Bullying and Evaluation From Schools and Local Authorities in England. Pastoral Care, June, 2007
Motivational Interviewing and the Critical Thinking Line

Motivational Interviewing and the Critical Thinking Line can be used in conjunction with the Method of Shared Concern or when a student has limited capacity to empathise with the person who has been bullied. These strategies assist students who bully others to talk about why they engage in this behaviour.

Motivational Interviewing

**Key points**

- This strategy is best used with students who bully who are not responding well to the Method of Shared Concern or who have limited empathy for the person that they bullied.
- Motivational Interviewing will not work with all students and may be less effective with individuals who are not willing to talk about their bullying behaviour.

**Interviewing students who bully**

Always begin by asking the student who bullies others if it is okay to talk about bullying. You need their permission to proceed. Explain that all discussion is confidential and if they prefer not to talk about bullying they can read the school’s behaviour expectation policy.

**Step 1**

*Getting permission*

Involves students in the conversation and get their permission before getting started:

- I’d like to spend a few minutes talking about your behaviour, is that okay with you?

**Step 2**

*Open-ended questions*

To ‘get the ball rolling’ students may need to be drawn into conversation. Open-ended questions require more than single word responses and may provide opportunities to explore students’ issues. These question stems may help:

Ask open-ended questions, such as:

- To what extent…
- How often…
- Why…
- Tell me about…
- Help me understand…
Avoid asking closed questions, such as:

Did you..?
Will you..?

Step 3
Reflective listening

Asking more than three questions in a row may stop the conversation; reflections demonstrate that you have been listening to the student. They usually involve a statement restating, rephrasing, paraphrasing or deducing from the information given to you (a reflection that slightly understates may work best). Reflections result in affirming or validating the student and keeping the student talking and thinking.

The following are safe reflections:

• It sounds like this has been tough for you…
• It sounds like you’re not happy with…
• It sounds like you’re a bit uncomfortable about…
• It sounds like you’re not ready to…
• It sounds like you’re having a problem with…

Step 4
Summarising

At natural breaks summarise the conversation. These summaries allow all ‘facts’ to be considered and gives the student the opportunity to correct or add to the story so far. For example:

• Let me see if I understand what you’ve told me so far…
• Okay, this is what I’ve heard so far…

Follow-up with...

• Okay, how did I do?
• What have I missed?
• Anything you want to correct or add?

Step 5
Self-motivational statements

The aim is to allow the student to ‘discover’ discrepancies in their behaviour. The interviewer encourages students to voice their own motivation for behaviour change and helps students find solutions to the barriers they have created. For example:

• Could you tell me some of the things you like (enjoy) about…
• Could you tell me some of the things you don’t like about…
• Could you tell me some of the reasons why you might want to change your…
• Could you tell me some of the reasons why you may not want to change… (fears, barriers)
• How might your life be different if you…

Remember that bullying is seen by the person doing the bullying as having both benefits and disadvantages. Help students to clarify for themselves their own barriers to, and benefits of, stopping the bullying behaviour.
What do you like about, or get out of, bullying someone? (barriers to stopping)

What makes it hard for you to stop?

What are some things that you think aren’t so good about bullying? (advantages of stopping)

If the student cannot think of any advantages of stopping, ask the student to role-play someone convincing you not to bully. For example, ‘If I was bullying someone, how would you convince me to stop?’

When the advantages and disadvantages of bullying have been identified, summarise both sides of the issue. For example, ‘On one hand you want to bully because... but you also say that it is the best way to deal with the situation because... What do you think about this?’

Step 6
Offering advice

Allow students time to explore their barriers. Ask students to identify who could help them to stop using bullying behaviour and where and when they might need help. (Again, you may have to ask students to imagine that they want to stop)

Summarise what they have said. ‘So, what you are telling me is...’

If students are interested, ask for permission to offer tips. ‘Would you like to hear some things other students have found useful for changing their behaviour so they don’t bully others?’

It is important not to offer unsolicited information or advice. There may be times when students require information or suggestions. Information or advice should only be provided when:

* the student asks for it
* the student gives you permission to provide it.

Where possible offer only the facts and ask the student to interpret them.

Students may need help to identify the best strategies. If the student asks for suggestions or provides permission, you may provide a range of strategies others have used (for example, decision-making techniques). However, where possible ask the student to identify strategies that have worked previously for them or they have observed others using.

Remind the student that there are people in the school and the community who can help them with information and support for their behaviour change.
Sample questions for Motivational Interviewing

1. Positives/benefits (good things)
   • What are some of the good things about your bullying behaviour?
   • What do you enjoy about bullying?
   • How important are these things to you?

2. Less positive/costs (not-so-good things)
   • What is there about your bullying behaviour that you or other people might see as reasons for concern?
   • What worries you about your bullying behaviour? What can you imagine happening to you?
   • What do you think might happen if you don’t make a change?

3. Life Goals
   • How do you see yourself?
   • Describe to me what sort of person you are.
   • How do your friends, teachers and parents see you?
   • What would be the advantages of making a change?

4. Compare with current unchanged behaviour
   • How would you like things to be different in the future?
   • You’d like to be..., so what do you think is stopping you?
   • You’ve told me something about yourself and your bullying behaviour, but how would you like to see yourself in three months’ time?

5. Ask for a decision
   • Where does that leave you now?
   • What do you think you might want to do now?

6. Plan a short-term goal
**Reminder Cards**

Schools involved in CHPRC research found it useful to print the following cards to keep with them while on duty, as prompts for discussing bullying situations with students. They also enlarged them and displayed on their office wall to assist student discussions, without appearing to look up information or question ideas.

**Sentence starters**
- Tell me about...
- Okay, this is what I've heard so far...
- It sounds like this has been tough for you...
- Because...
- Give me a recent example...
- What's your next step?

**Key skills and strategies**
- Asking permission (supports student autonomy)
- Open-ended questions
- Reflective listening (keep it rolling)
- Summarising (stop, assess, move on)
- Elicit change talk (student decision to change)
- Build empathy
- Avoid arguments (roll with resistance)
- Provide information (but let student interpret it)

**Motivational Interviewing**
+ (good things about...)
- (less good things about...)
S Summarise
A Assess balance of + and -
G Goal set
S Support
Critical Thinking Line

The Critical Thinking Line is based on a number line and can be used for many purposes. For younger students the line can be used to help students consider the intensity of their feelings. For example, 'You are feeling angry. Look at the 'Thinking Line' and tell me how angry you feel'. In class students can think of the things that make them feel most angry and mark these on the line. This allows students to see how others feel and their levels of response to those feelings.

The Critical Thinking Line can also be used when talking to students about bullying. It is best used in conjunction with the Method of Shared Concern or Motivational Interviewing as a means to establish, for example, some feelings of empathy for the student being bullied.

The interviewer asks the student to consider how they feel about the person they have been bullying. Then ask the student, on a scale of 1-10, how strong that feeling is. On this scale 1 is low, 10 is high.

For example:

‘On a scale of 1–10 how do you feel about ________?’

Very few students have been found to answer 0. But if this happens ask the student why and continue with the process you are using, either Shared Concern or Motivational Interviewing.

A student might say: ‘He’s about a 4’.

The interviewer then replies: ‘Okay about a 4. What was it about that person that made you decide on a 4 rather than a lower score, like a 3?’ (At this point you are trying to get the student bullying to identify some positive characteristics about the student being bullied.) For example, the student might reply: ‘Well he’s not the worst kid I ever met’. From this point the interviewer can attempt to establish some positive attributes of the bullied student.

The interviewer then asks why the student bullying didn’t give the other student a higher score, for instance a 5. At this point the student will usually point out the reasons why this particular student was targeted for bullying. This is an important starting point for discussion relating to the characteristics and feelings of the other person, and how the bullying may be affecting that student.

This method of getting the student to think critically about the person they are bullying helps to develop an awareness of how the bullying situation developed and may provide ideas as to how this problem could be addressed.
Vision Statement and Guiding Principles

Prior to reviewing school behavioural expectations policies that encourage students' positive social behaviour and aim to reduce student bullying, it is important to consider how this policy links to the school's vision statement and guiding principles. The following checklist of ideas and examples were found by schools involved in CHPRC research to be useful when developing a vision statement and guiding principles.

Developing your whole-school community vision statement

Developing a vision statement for the safety and wellbeing of school community members accounts for their values, priorities and common understandings. The National Safe Schools Framework's overarching vision is:

'All Australian schools are safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing.' [203 (p. 3)]

To develop a vision statement, the following questions may be helpful.

In five years time:

• What would it be like to be part of this school?
• How would you feel as you walk into the school?
• What would the school look like as you move around?
• What would people be saying about your school and its staff, parents and students?

Vision statements are most effective when they are worded positively. Outline what is to be achieved in simple terms that are easy to recall, and convey messages everyone can understand and relate to.

Caring and respect are the foundations of a school community that is free from bullying and harassment.

Identifying the guiding principles to achieve your vision

Guiding principles provide the foundations for the development of a comprehensive, school-wide effort to promote a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment. The guiding principles define how the school plans to action the whole-school community vision. The National Safe Schools Framework Guiding Principles[203] is a useful starting point.

Also consider how the school will achieve the whole-school community vision, for example:

• everyone has the right to feel safe and to be safe
• every member of our school community is treated with respect
• everyone feels part of the whole-school community and is included in its vision
• common goals are clearly articulated and prioritised
• everyone knows their role in the school and have the skills and knowledge to fulfil that role
• written documentation provides the school community with a consistent approach to addressing bullying strategies and is in place to prevent and respond effectively to situations which may impact upon the wellbeing of school community members.

These ideas could be used in the formulation of principles to determine how the school could achieve its vision.
The following is an example of guiding principles developed and tested by schools involved in CHPRC research.

**The school:**

✓ affirms the right of all school community members to feel safe and supported in a school environment where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity

✓ ensures all community members understand their responsibility to ensure everyone feels physically and psychologically safe

✓ promotes a clear, well-defined, agreed understanding that bullying/cyberbullying is not acceptable behaviour

✓ promotes well-defined and agreed understanding of acceptable behaviour for all members of the school community, both online and offline

✓ establishes and endorses a shared responsibility between the whole-school community to prevent and report incidences of bullying/cyberbullying

✓ develops and consistently implements student behaviour policies which articulate programs and processes for promoting a safe and supportive environment

✓ encourages active participation of staff, students, families and the whole-school community to plan, implement and evaluate school policies, procedures and practices

✓ ensures that the roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community outlined in the policy are explicit and clearly understood, and the actions associated with these roles are consistently implemented

✓ recognises that leadership, which is committed to a shared vision through policy and practice, is essential for establishing a safe and supportive school environment

✓ focuses on evidence-based intervention and management strategies and incorporates procedures and programs which are restorative and solution focused

✓ implements universal, whole-school prevention and intervention programs including formal and informal activities in the curriculum, school ethos and environment, student support and family links, to ensure all members of the school community have common levels of awareness and consistent responses to bullying/cyberbullying

✓ provides professional learning and support for staff to implement the student behaviour policies

✓ regularly monitors and evaluates policies and programs so evidence-based practice supports decisions and guides improvement.
Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.5

Policy Review Process

Permeate school vision through policy documents

1. Which policies may need to be developed/reviewed?

Which policies may need to be developed/reviewed?

When considering the writing or review of policy/ies that address the expected behaviours of members of the school community, it is important to consider the context for this policy relative to other related school policies. Policy document/s are easier to understand and implement if the messages are consistent in all policy documents.

These policies may include:

- enrolment policy
- bullying/cyberbullying policy
- student expectations agreement
- expected behaviour policy
- excursion policy
- boarding house policies
- communication policies
- mobile phone policy
- ICT agreement
- staff guidelines
- parent expectations
Policies addressing the expected behaviours of school community members are closely linked to the school's overarching vision. Once the whole-school vision and guiding principles are established the next stage is to develop policies to guide practice in the school.

The name given to the school policy outlining expected behaviours varies in each school. While these policy documents may specifically address bullying, it is critical for this document to be framed positively. School community members are more likely to respond to a policy which expects they will be behave well at all times rather than the reverse. The following section will assist in writing a school's expected behaviour policy. The policy may include:

2.1 Whole-school community agreement
2.2 Policy rationale
2.3 Policy objectives
2.4 Whole-school common understandings about prosocial behaviour and bullying/cyberbullying
2.5 Rights and responsibilities of the school community
2.6 Preventing and responding to bullying/cyberbullying behaviour

**2.1 Whole-school community agreement**

Effective policies state a clear intention to take bullying involving any member of the school community very seriously and respond to it effectively. Students, teachers, parents, caregivers and members of the wider school community have a shared responsibility to create a safe and happy environment, free from all forms of bullying. A shared responsibility between all school community members to prevent bullying and actively work together to resolve incidents of bullying behaviour when they occur, is most effective when clearly articulated and described in a way that is understood by all members of the school community.

**2.2 Policy rationale**

A clear statement of purpose regarding bullying prevention and management is articulated in the policy. It should clearly but succinctly state what this policy is for and emphasise the school’s positive goals.

**2.3 Policy objectives**

The objectives of an expected behaviour policy outlines the outcomes the school wishes to achieve by implementing this policy. When writing these consider how the outcomes will be measured and whether they can be used in the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of policy implementation.
2.4 Whole-school common understandings about prosocial behaviour and bullying/cyberbullying

It is important for all members of the school community to share common understandings about what is bullying and what is not bullying. Clear definitions developed by the school community will help to clearly identify the types of social behaviours that are expected within the school and the types of behaviours that are not. These understandings will also enhance the quality and consistency of response to bullying by the school community. Common understandings typically included in a school policy include:

- definition of bullying/cyberbullying
- types and examples of bullying/cyberbullying
- information about actions that should be taken by the person being victimised and bystanders to the bullying/cyberbullying behaviour.

The following provides an example of what could be included in the school’s behaviour expectations policy.

**Definition of bullying/cyberbullying**

Bullying is a repeated behaviour that may be physical, verbal, written and/or psychological; where there is intent to cause fear, distress, or harm to another; that is conducted by a more powerful individual or group; against a less powerful individual or group of individuals who is/are unable to stop this from happening.

**Power:** A person who engages in bullying may display power through various means: physical size and strength; status within a peer group; and recruitment within the peer group so as to exclude others.

**Frequency:** Bullying is not a random act— it is characterised by being repetitive. Students who are bullied not only have to endure the humiliation of the bullying, but many live in fear of its re-occurrence.

**Intent to harm:** People who engage in bullying/cyberbullying behaviour usually deny any intent to harm others and may not always be fully conscious of the harm they cause. Causing physical and emotional harm, however, is usually a deliberate act. It puts the person who is bullied in a position of oppression by the person who is engaging in the bullying.

**Cyberbullying** is when, over a period of time, an individual or a group use information and communication technologies to intentionally harm a person, who finds it hard to stop this bullying from continuing.
Types and examples of bullying/cyberbullying

Physical bullying – *repeatedly and deliberately*:
- bumping, pulling, shoving or tripping someone
- throwing things at someone to hurt, annoy or upset them
- hitting, punching or slapping, pinching, biting or scratching someone
- touching someone who doesn’t want to be touched.

Verbal bullying – *repeatedly and deliberately*:
- calling people names or offensive nicknames
- making racial comments about someone and their family
- rude comments or jokes about someone’s religion
- teasing someone or being sarcastic in a way that is hurtful and upsetting
- comments about the way someone may look or behave that are hurtful
- nasty comments about someone’s sexual orientation, perceived or otherwise.

Threatening – *repeatedly and deliberately*:
- making someone feel afraid that they are going to be hurt
- pressuring someone to do things they don’t want to do
- aggressive gestures or looks that make someone afraid
- forcing students to do hurtful or embarrassing things
- forcing someone to give you money, food or belongings.

Property abuse – *repeatedly and deliberately*:
- damaging someone’s belongings
- stealing someone’s money
- taking things away from someone
- taking or hiding someone’s belongings.

Emotional bullying – *repeatedly and deliberately*:
- ignoring someone or keeping them out of group conversations (known as exclusion)
- leaving someone out by encouraging others not to have anything to do with them
- spreading lies or stories about someone to try to get others to dislike someone
- making things up to get someone into trouble
- stalking someone, by continually following them or giving unwanted attention, e.g. staring.

Cyberbullying – *repeatedly and deliberately*:
- ignoring someone or sending nasty messages through social media such as Facebook
- sharing electronic images of people without their permission
- sending harassing, abusive or offensive messages online, e.g. *through social media or by phone*
- making silent or abusive phone calls
- spreading rumours online, e.g. *through social media or by phone.*
Bystanders to bullying/cyberbullying

A bystander is someone who sees the bullying or knows that it is happening. Bystanders can be identified in the following categories:

- **Supporters** - support the person bullying, either by helping them to bully the other person or by encouraging the person bullying
- **Spectators** - gather or deliberately stay to watch the incident (sometimes from concern and sometimes for enjoyment)
- **Witnesses** - are aware that the incident is occurring (know about the bullying or see it from a distance)
- **Defenders** - support the person being bullied, either directly, or indirectly.

It is expected that all students in the school would take some positive action to support the person being bullied directly (for example, by inviting the person being bullied to join their group, or letting them know what happened was wrong) or indirectly (for example, by asking an adult for help).

### 2.5 Rights and responsibilities of the school community

Individual and shared responsibilities of students, families and school staff when addressing bullying behaviour are best understood when outlined in the school policy. For example, an acknowledgement can be made that it is the responsibility of the whole-school community to encourage positive social behaviour and discourage bullying.

**Rights**

A statement of the rights of students, staff and families with respect to bullying at school, including:

- a declaration of the rights of individuals in the whole-school community to be free of bullying
- a statement of rights of students, staff, families and the wider school community with respect to prosocial behaviour and types of bullying.

**Responsibilities**

A statement of the shared responsibilities of staff, students and families to model positive social behaviours and to prevent and respond to reports and observations of bullying.

**Examples**

Schools have a responsibility to inform staff, students, families and the wider school community about the expected behaviour policy including:

- providing families and students with clear information about strategies that promote appropriate behaviour and the consequences for inappropriate behaviour
- providing students with strategies to respond assertively (not aggressively) to incidents of bullying behaviour, including responsibilities as bystanders to bullying situations
- communicating to families the important role they play in encouraging prosocial behaviours and resolving incidents of bullying behaviour involving their children
- outlining how the school leadership team will support, promote, enact, maintain and review the policy and procedures.
Students, staff and families have a shared responsibility to:

- promote positive relationships that respect individual differences in the school community
- acknowledge their responsibility as role models of positive, caring and respectful behaviour
- be familiar with the school’s expected behaviour policy and procedures
- be observant of signs and symptoms of bullying
- report incidents of bullying
- actively work together to resolve incidents of bullying behaviour when they occur
- support families to be open in their discussions about bullying in the school, being observant of signs of bullying, treating reports of bullying seriously, supporting their children in developing positive responses to incidents of bullying consistent with the school’s expectations, and support the school to effectively address bullying through the strategies outlined in the school’s policy documents
- respond in an appropriate, timely and consistent manner to incidents of bullying by recording and following up incidents of bullying in accordance with the school’s policy documents.

2.6 Preventing and responding to bullying/cyberbullying behaviour

Preventing bullying/cyberbullying behaviour

The following checklist of bullying/cyberbullying prevention strategies can be consistently implemented through the school’s behavioural expectations policies:

Whole-school ethos
✓ The school has an ethos that enables safety, care, support and respect for all school community members.

Student behaviour policy
✓ A whole-school behavioural expectations policy is developed and implemented to encourage the promotion of positive social behaviour and the prevention and establishment of effective responses to bullying/cyberbullying.

Staff professional learning
✓ All school staff members have a consistent understanding about bullying/cyberbullying and how to respond to situations.

Orientation
✓ The behavioural expectations policy is promoted during the orientation and provided to all new students, parents, staff, relief staff and other school community members (including externally contracted staff such as bus drivers, providers of extra-curricular activities).

Classroom
✓ The classroom environment and curriculum is used to establish common understandings about bullying/cyberbullying and how to respond effectively, while building positive social skills, online and offline, with students.
Peer support
✓ The peer group is encouraged to provide support for students being bullied and fosters positive peer group influence to discourage bullying/cyberbullying.

School physical environment
✓ The school provides a safe, well supervised school environment with opportunities for positive social interaction, both online and offline, which promote support and respect.

Family links
✓ Families are actively involved in the school and its response to bullying.
Responding to bullying/cyberbullying behaviour

The following seven-step response plan provides an outline of actions that need to be considered by schools once they identify students who have been involved in bullying.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Co-LATE model</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(see Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listen to students involved to understand the situation and any history which may be relevant to the incident. Ensure notes are taken during this process (this must be the case for every stage). Discuss the situation with:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- students directly involved</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- bystanders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- staff involved</td>
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<td>- families (as necessary)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- administration staff (depending upon harm/risk involved).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Assess risk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assess the level of risk/harm (consider the frequency, intensity, type and the duration of the bullying behaviour) associated with the incident and triage as high, moderate or low.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Report</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(see Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkits 3.6 and 3.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use the contact recommendations to determine who needs to be contacted, including:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- governance structures – system level or school board</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- principal – administration team</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- pastoral care team</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- families</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- external support agencies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- teachers/ tutors of young people involved</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- school support services – psychologist, nurse</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Record</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Collect, record and store all information related to each case. Ensure each stage has been recorded.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Selection of restorative technique</td>
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<td>(see Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.7)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Discuss restorative technique options with relevant staff, families and students. Determine which technique to use based on the school policy the Triage Guide (see over) to determine technique (e.g. Method of Shared Concern; Co-LATE Model; Motivational Interviewing; Support Group Method; Individual Behaviour Plans). Agree on the plan to be implemented.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Implement plan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implement the agreed plan of action. Reinforce positive behaviour. Ensure all vested parties (as determined in report phase) have a copy of the agreed plan and are working together to reinforce positive behaviours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Additional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying incidences appear to resurface. Check in with all parties involved in the incident at regular predetermined interval. Offer additional support to those students who are experiencing difficulties adhering to the bounds of the agreed plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Triage for Restorative Responses to Bullying Behaviour

The Friendly Schools Plus triage response plan is a guide to help school staff determine under what circumstances one response to bullying behaviour may be chosen instead of another. In many circumstances the decision will be based on the schools’ values and policies related to student behaviour and the schools’ capacity, and in particular, its resources and staff skills. If the school’s culture and policies are more discipline based then it is more likely it will select a disciplinary model of response. Whereas schools with a culture and policies related to caring for students may be more likely to choose a restorative response. The triage proposed below has assumed the use of a more caring approach—one that is more restorative. However, in severe or extreme bullying cases legal or firm disciplinary action may be the necessary duty of care, no matter what the school’s approach.

Try this first

The simplest of these techniques is called the Co-LATE model (See Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.7). This technique can easily be used by all school staff to encourage students to feel safe and listened to by adults. The Co-LATE Model was tested as part of the KIT+ Project conducted by the CHPRC and was found, qualitatively, to be very useful for encouraging students to talk with teachers (and other adults) about any issue, but particularly bullying. Co-LATE has value as an immediate response to students’ who report bullying, prior to them engaging in more formal counselling.

What next?

While every student and situation is different in many ways, the following general triage guide may help school staff to decide which restorative method with which to begin. The diagram has attempted to profile the students (both targets and perpetrators who may benefit the most from these techniques). Students may also require a behavioural expectations plan to support positive behaviour change. A small proportion of students, however, will require psychological treatment beyond the scope of school services, especially in schools with limited access to qualified counselling staff. These students need to be linked via their families to these services as soon as possible.
### Possible Restorative Approaches for Students Who Bully Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restorative approach</th>
<th>Triage checklist - perpetrator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Method of Shared Concern**  
*Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.1*  
**Age:** upper primary and lower secondary students  
For cases that are low to moderate severity | • willingness to change behaviour  
• groups of students identified as bullying others  
• feels remorse, capacity for empathy  
• also bullied by others (bully/victim)  
• multiple targets  
• agreeable to participating in a series of meetings |
| **Support Group Approach**  
*Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.2*  
**Age:** middle to upper primary students  
For cases that are low to low-moderate severity | • currently or previously a friend of target  
• girls bullying girls  
• target has other supportive friends  
• feels remorse, has capacity for empathy  
• influenced by group norms and normative expectations  
• agreeable to participating in a series of meetings |
| **Motivational Interviewing**  
*Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.3*  
**Age:** all secondary students  
For cases that are low to moderate severity | • does not feel remorse, limited capacity for empathy  
• also bullied by others (bully/victim)  
• popular and/or high self-esteem  
• willing to talk about behaviour  
• multiple targets  
• agreeable to participating in a series of meetings |

### Possible Restorative Approaches for Students Who are a Target of Bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselling approach</th>
<th>Triage checklist - target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Method of Shared Concern**  
*Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.1*  
**Age:** upper primary and lower secondary students  
For cases that are low to moderate severity | • provocative target  
• multiple perpetrators and/or bullied for extended length of time  
• also a perpetrator (bully/victim)  
• lower self-esteem  
• agreeable to participating in a series of meetings |
| **Support Group Method**  
*Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.2*  
**Age:** middle to upper primary students  
For cases that are low to low-moderate severity | • currently or previously a friend of perpetrator  
• girls bullying girls  
• target has other supportive friends  
• agreeable to participating in a series of meetings |
| **Motivational Interviewing**  
*Proactive Policies and Practices Toolkit 3.3*  
**Age:** all secondary students  
For cases that are low to moderate severity | • high motivation to take action to stop bullying  
• willingness to help themselves  
• multiple perpetrators and/or bullied for extended length of time  
• provocative target  
• also a perpetrator (bully/victim)  
• agreeable to participating in a series of meetings |
Reviewing and implementing policy

The policy review process will assist school communities to reflect on current practices and determine the need to review, refine or improve specific aspects of the policy. The process involves using data from a number of sources as shown in Figure 4, to objectively review the whole-school processes and environment. Some schools will already have effective policies and procedures in place to respond to bullying situations while other schools will still be planning and developing these areas.

It is important for schools to conduct a review involving their school community to effectively:

- understand the problems associated with bullying/cyberbullying
- develop common commitment to the reduction of bullying/cyberbullying
- motivate the community to support and promote positive behaviours
- develop a plan of action specific to the schools’ needs.

Whole-School Community Review of Policy

![Diagram showing discussions, review, focus groups, inventories, support, and actions for whole-school community review of policy.](image-url)

Figure 4: Whole-School Community Review of Policy
3.1 Gathering information

The development of the whole-school plan for addressing bullying/cyberbullying can be part of an ongoing, collaborative planning and review process, including specific methods of:

- monitoring the whole-school policy which includes input from students, families, staff, education officers and community agencies, and a timeline for review and modification, e.g. annual review.
- maintaining awareness raising activities to regularly reaffirm the school’s philosophy on prosocial behaviour and bullying
- keeping action on bullying a high priority
- identifying resources (including staff and time) committed to support the recommendations from this process.

Collecting and analysing appropriate data on the nature and extent of bullying/cyberbullying

A variety of methods of data collection will provide the most thorough understanding of the current school climate. It is useful to collect the following information from students, staff, families and the broader school community:

- the nature and extent of bullying
- the impact of bullying on students
- which students are most affected
- what is being done by the school to encourage positive social behaviour and reduce bullying
- the outcomes of the school’s response to bullying
- satisfaction with the school’s response to bullying.

These data can be used to inform the review of the school policy to ensure it is understood, relevant to students’ current behaviours and experiences.

Information can be gathered from general observations of the relationships and social interactions within the school community. However, the use of an anonymous questionnaire (especially online) can be a useful way to collect information about the bullying/cyberbullying experiences of students. The examples described are ways schools have collected data from students, parents and staff to help inform the development/review of the school’s policies. For more information about questionnaire development, please see Key Understandings and Competencies Toolkit 4.2.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires can be excellent sources of data to inform planning decisions. If possible, it is a good idea to use a pre-existing survey that has been tested for validity (how accurately each question measures what it was trying to measure) and reliability (how consistently each question is perceived by the group of respondents). It is useful to repeat the survey each year to track social behaviours, both online and offline, within the school community. Longitudinal data (data collected in consecutive years) will provide valuable trend information compared to cross-sectional data (one-off data collection).
Analysis of student behaviour records, that describe the name of the students, the time, the location, the consequences and follow-up for each reported incident of bullying, will identify the kinds of behaviours and behavioural trends that may be occurring in the school. This information can be used to propose prevention and response strategies for the future, as well as provide insight into possible behaviours that may have been overlooked without data.

The types of student behaviour record information that can be analysed includes:

- Who are the students who repeatedly get into trouble?
- What is the nature of their bullying/cyberbullying behaviour?
- How serious were these behaviours?
- Is there a trend in the type of behaviours and year levels or gender involvement?
- When (time of day) do students most often bully?
- What months or days of the week are office referrals most common?
- Where does the bullying/cyberbullying behaviour most often take place?
- Did these behaviours result in referral to the case management team/administration team?
- Are there behaviours handled differently by some teachers (for example, handled in their classrooms), while other teachers use referrals to case management teams?
- Who refers students most often?
- Is there consistency in response across the school?
- Are there consequences that seem to reduce referrals? If so, what?
- Do these consequences work differently for different groups of students, (for example, boys/girls, younger/older?)
- Is there a sequence of responses that work best?
- How have bystanders been involved?

Focus groups

A focus group is a group interview involving approximately 8 to 12 participants that is used to collect qualitative information through group discussion of the issues. The one to two hour discussion is facilitated by a moderator who asks carefully constructed non-leading questions that encourage group discussion and interaction. Open-ended questions work best, for example: *What sort of consequences should be given to students who break the rules with regard to their use of technology?* Simple scenarios to accompany the questions are sometimes helpful. Parents are more likely to attend school focus groups when they are specifically invited (principal sends a letter of invitation), if the focus group is hosted as a breakfast or dinner meeting, and/or engaging students to encourage parents to attend.

Intercept interviews

Parents waiting for their children after school or at sports carnivals/events may be willing to provide a random selection of responses. Students can also be trained to conduct interviews with peers or adults, which may result in more candid and honest responses. It may be useful for interviewees to have a digital recorder so they don't have to worry about taking notes while listening.
3.2 Review of current school policy and practice

At a school level decide how often the policy will be reviewed to determine the success of elements of the policy documents. Some areas to consider when reviewing a policy are:

- Who will be involved in the policy review?
- What specific areas of the policy will be examined based on the information gathered (for example, types/rates of prosocial behaviour or bullying/cyberbullying among specific year groups, gender groups and so on)?
- Which areas in the policy may become priorities for the following year?
- How will the review recommendations be implemented?
- How will the review recommendations be communicated?
- Is the date for the next policy review written into the policy?

Strategies for consultation and collaboration

As school policies related to prosocial behaviour and bullying need to be owned by the school community and represent the beliefs and values of the school community, it is ideal for all members of the whole-school community to have an opportunity to contribute to its development/review. Students need to also be included in the feedback process. Each participant needs to feel respected and valued for their contribution to the policy development process. Indicate a realistic deadline for feedback and where possible, hold meetings to discuss the content. Schools that consult widely in the development of their behavioural policies achieve better policy compliance.

Feedback on the draft policy can be obtained by:

- making copies available at the front administration and advertising in the school newsletter and at assemblies that the policy is available to be reviewed
- distributing copies to all staff; teaching and non-teaching
- presenting the draft policy at various meetings of different groups (staff meetings, student council, school council, P&C/P&F)
- approaching community reference groups or individuals and requesting their feedback
- attaching and distributing by mail or email a short questionnaire with the draft policy.

Consider involving those groups that may have difficulty giving feedback, by personally contacting those families who may lack confidence approaching the school. For example, where possible have the policy translated for those families who speak English as a second language. Seek out those that may be opposed to what is being proposed and involve them directly in the process of review. Where possible, identify issues early in the review process that may be controversial and engage appropriate community members who can help to resolve these issues.

Incorporating the feedback

Collate the feedback from school community members and identify the main points and general themes of the responses. It may be necessary to investigate some of the responses further and gather more information or advice to address any concerns raised in the feedback.

Feedback collected from the school community could be incorporated into a second draft. Inform the school community that the policy is being rewritten to incorporate their feedback. Issues for further discussion may need to be raised at staff and parent meetings and assemblies. Circulate the second draft among the leadership/pastoral care team, students, staff and interested members/groups from the school
community. There may be a number of iterations following this procedure, as new feedback is collated and incorporated into a workable document. This process works well for schools developing new mobile phone or social media use policies for the school, where there can be many vested and opposing interests.

**Have the policy endorsed**

Endorsement of the policy allows the school community to confirm that they are aware of, and understand, the policy. This process is more likely to lead to whole-school ownership and therefore implementation of, and compliance, to the policy. Once the final draft policy is produced, the school’s project team can determine who is most appropriate to endorse the policy. It is best to have a range of people from the school community to endorse the policy. Consider endorsement from the school board/council, school management team, student council, staff, and P&C/P&F groups.

### 3.3 Implementing the policy

**Publishing the policy**

After developing or reviewing the behaviour policies it is important it is published and distributed to all staff, students, parents and community members in a way that is easily accessed and understood. Most schools develop a detailed, formal policy as the official master document that is available to all school community members. It is worthwhile working with students to develop simplified versions in online or offline brochure or pamphlet format that present key information in an easy to read layout for other students and families. Students can help to present the policy in language they understand.

**Disseminating the policy**

**Policy launch**

Schools may consider officially launching the policy during a bullying or positive social behaviour awareness campaign (such as a Bullying Awareness week) or by contacting the local community newspaper to publish an article. Provide a date on which the policy will come into effect and make copies available in the library and school office. Consider putting abridged versions (perhaps developed by students) of the policy into the school diary, on the web portal and other places accessed by the school community.

**Orientation**

The orientation of new staff, students and families is an ideal time to disseminate policies. This ensures everyone arriving in the school has a copy and an understanding of the school’s position and action on key issues.

In summary, school dissemination strategies might include:

- sending key policies home with all students at the start of the school year
- including key policies in ‘orientation packs’ or information provided to all new students and their families
- including key policies on the school website and in student diaries and handbooks
- increasing the awareness of all staff (including library, canteen and all other support staff) by explaining key policies at the start of a new school year
- discussing students’ rights and responsibilities at the first assembly of the year; with students, staff and families present if possible
- providing key policies to all relief staff and new staff who start during the year.
Policy promotion

While structured activities raise general awareness of the school’s key policies, it is important that brief, regular reminders of the policy are incorporated into whole-school activity. Strategies to raise awareness about policies related to encouraging prosocial behaviour and reducing bullying may include:

• discussing at assemblies school expectations regarding prosocial behaviours
• discussions and learning activities addressing bullying in classes
• developing a process for school administration staff to track incidents
• offering training to staff in strategies to encourage prosocial behaviours and reduce bullying
• enhancing the peer support/buddy system in the school
• reviewing how students are recognised and rewarded for supportive behaviour
• up-skilling teachers in positive uses of technology and other cyberbullying prevention strategies
• discussing with staff how the positive messages in the behavioural policies can be addressed in every learning area
• discussing the behavioural expectations for the whole-school community at parent nights.

Policy into practice

Adopting any policy where changes to school operations are necessary is best accomplished in stages. Plans to implement the policy can be made public so the community has ample time to prepare for the upcoming changes.
Preparing the School Community to Resolve Incidents of Bullying

**HIGH LEVEL HARM**

Co-LATE Model
- Triage - student ability to show empathy assessed
- External support services sourced (in discussion with family)
- Consequences as per policy recommendations
- Motivational Interviewing
- Method of Shared Concern (if capacity for empathy)/Support Group Method
- Individual Behaviour Plan

*Should consequence be exclusion from school, then a strategy for the students’ return to school should be developed and discussed with student and family.*

**MANAGED BY PASTORAL CARE TEAM AND ADMINISTRATION**

Contact recommendations - severe incidents
- System level/governance (e.g. school board) contacts especially if suspended
- Principal - administration team
- Pastoral care team
- Families

**MODERATE HARM**

Co-LATE Model
- Triage - student ability to show empathy assessed
- Motivational Interviewing
- Consequences as per policy recommendations
- Individual Behaviour Plan (ratified by student, family and staff)
- Method of Shared Concern (if capacity for empathy)/Support Group Method

**MANAGED BY PASTORAL CARE TEAM AND ADMINISTRATION**

Contact recommendations - serious incidents
- Principal - administration team
- Pastoral care team
- Families
- Teachers/tutors of young people involved

**MODERATE HARM**

Co-LATE Model
- Method of Shared Concern (if capacity for empathy)/Support Group Method
- Low level consequence as per policy recommendation

**MANAGED BY TEACHER**

Contact recommendations - low level incidents
- Families
- Teachers/tutors of young people involved
Co-LATE Model

CHPRC research schools report finding the Co-LATE model helpful when talking to students about personal issues, including relationship difficulties and bullying behaviour. The model is simple and can be used by all school staff, regardless of their role in the school. The Co-LATE model is based on the work of Michael Tunnecliffe (2000) and comprises five steps:

Confidentiality
Listen
Acknowledge concerns
Talk about the options
End with encouragement

Confidentiality

Students involved in CHPRC research express concern that school staff will discuss their interactions with other staff members. To address this, school staff can be clear with students about when they may need to talk to other adults about the content of their conversation (for example, duty of disclosure). If staff need to consult other staff about student interactions, it is important to do so in a confidential location (not by the photocopier), and with the permission of the student concerned. In addition, the location of student health and wellbeing services at the school can impact on the likelihood of student access. Locating these services in areas used by students for a variety of purposes (for example, with year coordinators) means that students can access them, without other students knowing which service they are attending.

Listen

Students involved in CHPRC research acknowledge the importance of good listening skills. Active listening enables school staff to confirm they have understood the details of the conversation accurately, as well as demonstrate to students they have been paying attention to them. Avoiding behaviours which demonstrate to students that staff do not have time to talk to them can enhance students' confidence in approaching staff. These may include watching the clock, shuffling papers and interrupting students.

Acknowledge concerns

School staff can acknowledge students' concerns, even if they do not agree with them. Acknowledging takes the form of paraphrasing students' concerns and their reaction to the situation. For example, 'So you are concerned that if you don't forward the email you have received about Sam, your friends might not want to have you around. I can see how that would upset you a lot.' Comments about opportunities to make new friends and dismissing students concerns are usually ineffective and demonstrate to students you don't understand the situation they are in. Hence, students may discontinue the conversation at this point.
Talk about the options

This step is likely to be most effective when school staff encourage students to identify solutions to their own concerns. This does not mean that staff cannot offer their own suggestions, but solutions suggested by, and endorsed by, students will likely be put into action faster than those suggested by staff. When identifying responses with students, it is important to also discuss the positive and negative consequences of each to enable students to make an informed decision about how to proceed with the situation.

End with encouragement

Ending the conversation with a summary of what was discussed can help students make a decision about how to proceed with their situation. In addition, it provides an opportunity for school staff to give encouragement to the student for deciding to implement their chosen response strategy. While school staff cannot guarantee the outcome of students’ actions and that they will resolve the situation, encouragement enables students to feel confident in trying to respond. At this point it may also be helpful to establish a time to have a follow-up meeting with the student, to discuss the effectiveness of implementing their strategy. If no follow-up is required, school staff can reassure students that they can reconnect if the situation is not resolved, or they need more support to take further action.
EARLY SELF-AWARENESS STUDIES WITH LOWLAND GORILLAS WERE BOTH CUTTING EDGE AND SHORT-LIVED