



## **WHAT CAN WE DO? BIAS, BULLYING, AND BYSTANDERS – LEARNING WAYS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM**

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**LEVEL:** Educators

**LENGTH OF TIME:** 60 - 90 minutes

**MATERIALS NEEDED:** *What Can We Do?* DVD, TV/Screen, computer and projector or DVD player (and connectors!), copies of handouts if you plan to use them, copies of the lesson plans featured in *What Can We Do?* – “Words that Hurt, Words that Heal”, “Name-Calling and Feeling Safe in School,” and “Making Decisions: Ally or Bystander.”

(Also see *Welcoming Schools* Responding to Challenging Questions.)

### **PREPARING TO WATCH THE FILM:**

Whether you watch this film alone or with a group, preparation helps to set the tone and space to get the most out of your viewing. Here are some suggestions:

- Take a look at the three lesson plans demonstrated in this video.
- Review additional Welcoming Schools materials related to bullying and bias.

### **ICE BREAKER (10 Minutes)**

- Opening with an ice-breaker such as *Reflections on Experiences with Bullying* helps people personally connect with the content of the workshop.

### **INTRODUCING THE FILM**

- This was filmed in two public schools that worked with a Welcoming Schools consultant who provided multiple professional development sessions for the entire faculty.
- The film shows the first time that these teachers have taught the lessons. We thank them for being brave enough to allow us to film in their classroom. Also, note that you are only seeing a part of the lesson in the film. We couldn't include everything.

### **WHILE YOU WATCH, PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING:**

- What topics the lessons address.
- The issues that children are dealing with. Notice all of the forms of bias or put-downs that the children mention in the film.
- How other students respond to and react to these issues.
- How the teacher addresses these issues.
- What preparation was needed by the teacher to implement the lessons.

### **SHOW THE FILM (15 Minutes)**

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## **SHARING AND REFLECTION: INITIAL REACTIONS TO THE FILM (5-15 Minutes)**

Select a few of the questions below to generate discussion:

- What stood out for you while watching the film?
- What moved you? What surprised you?
- What steps do you think your school would need to take to incorporate these lesson plans in your classrooms?"
- Did you notice the different forms of bias mentioned in the lessons, either by the teacher or the student comments? What were the different kinds of comments mentioned by the students?
- What were some of the responses you noticed among the children when certain things were said?
- What kinds of bias are the students in the film especially looking to adults to handle? Why do you think that is the case?
- What did you notice about the teacher(s) in response to student comments and questions?

## **WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO STOP HURTFUL LANGUAGE AND EDUCATE STUDENTS? DISCUSSING AND PRACTICING SAMPLE RESPONSES (15-25 MINUTES)**

Saying "don't use that word" is not enough.

We need to educate students about why something is hurtful and not simply send them to the principal's office or assume they understand. Check out: [What Do You Say to "That's So Gay"?](#) or [Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs about Gender](#)

Here are sample responses to things you might overhear students say. You can look for more samples within the handouts mentioned above. Also, you can start to develop and practice your own responses. Try these out...

- "Do you know what that means? It's a put down for someone's religion. There are many different religions in this world and in this school we have respect for all religions."
- "You may not have meant to hurt anyone, but saying 'that's gay' can hurt those around you. Do you know what that means? And if they say no, you can respond: "When used respectfully, it describes a man and a man or a woman and a woman who love each other. In our school we don't use words that describe people as putdowns."
- "That was a stereotype. Stereotypes are a kind of lie and they hurt people's feelings."

Practice responses to some of the following scenarios or scenarios that came up in the initial reactions to the film. When introducing the scenarios, remind participants that there is never just one right way to respond to any situation. Encourage them to think about:

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- What is their goal in responding to a comment?
  - How might different responses affect those who are directly involved and those who may be on the periphery of the conversation?
  - What information would help them address a situation that stretches their comfort zones?

Scenarios can be read out loud and practiced in pairs.

- “He said if you touch the floor it will turn you gay.” How would you handle this? Is there a way to make clear that using gay as a putdown is not OK and that some people are gay and that is OK?
- “He called him chocolate balls.” How might you respond to this and other slurs based on skin color? What do you think about the teachers sharing her own experience in her response?
- “Adults can just make it worse...” Why do you think students think this sometimes? What can you and all adults do to offer support, be available, and not make it worse when children tell us something is going on?
- In response to a comment about race one student states he “would not do anything” because he knows that he might start something himself. What might you say to support the child in their decision? Keep in mind, a student who is self-aware and avoids conflict is probably showing good judgment – but also needs adult support.

### **CLOSING, NEXT STEPS AND EVALUATION (10-15 minutes)**

In groups of two to five, ask participants to discuss the following questions. (If time is short, this can be done as a full-group brainstorm.)

- What do YOU need to address the issues brought up in the film?
- What does your SCHOOL need to address the issues in the film?

### **WHAT ARE THREE IMMEDIATE THINGS THAT YOU AND THE SCHOOL AS A WHOLE CAN DO TO START MEETING THESE NEEDS?**

#### **SUMMARY OF THE LESSONS PLANS IN *WHAT CAN WE DO?***

- **Words that Hurt, Words that Heal** with the book “One” by Kathryn Otoshi: This lesson, appropriate for grades K – 3, illustrates the power of being an ally as well as the impact of bullying on students. Generates discussion with students about ways they have experienced or witnessed bullying.
- **Name-Calling and Feeling Safe in School:** A lesson appropriate for all grade levels that helps educators talk about the safe and unsafe places at school – both physical and emotional.
- **Making Decisions: Ally or Bystander:** This lesson for grades 4 and up helps students sort out their choices and consider how they will respond – do nothing, tell the person to stop, tell an adult or talk to the child being harassed – to different bullying or hurtful teasing situations.