

ORGANIZING A NO NAME-CALLING WEEK IN YOUR SCHOOL

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Because most bullying happens outside of classrooms, *No Name-Calling Week* is most effective as a school wide project. Though classroom activities are at the heart of the program, making your entire school—instead of an individual classroom—a name-calling free zone will strengthen the program message and dramatically increase the safety and well-being of students.

A school wide *No Name-Calling Week* means school wide involvement—from students, administrators, teachers, family members and staff. The next few pages will take you step by step through the process of engaging and involving your entire school community in planning a fun and effective *No Name-Calling Week* at your school.

GAINING SUPPORT

CONSIDER YOUR VISION

If you are a teacher or guidance counselor, you will probably need support from your school's administration and/or another leadership body in order to move forward with a school wide *No Name-Calling Week*. School leaders will likely want to support a program aimed at improving school health and safety for all students. Still, they might have some concerns about whether the program will detract from required curriculum, how much work it will require from faculty and staff, and whether an anti-bullying program is even necessary at your school. Before meeting with your school principal or other leaders, you should give some thought to your vision of *No Name-Calling Week* at your school. What exactly will take place? Below is a brief list of ideas for your school's week, all of which are elaborated on within the next few pages. Maybe you'll have enough support and resources to organize all or most of them, or maybe you'll pick a few doable favorites. Consider what seems realistic, and share these ideas—and others of your own—when you speak with administrators and colleagues.

- Class lessons and activities about name-calling and bullying
- Essay and poster contest
- School newspaper article
- School assembly
- Library display
- Peer education program (students educate and support younger children; see, for example, "Using The Misfits to Promote Service Learning" on page ___)
- Discussion/ support group (guidance staff lead small groups of students in an exploration of feelings and ideas about verbal bullying)
- Support staff training (cafeteria, security, transportation, and recreation staff is trained in bullying intervention)
- Family event (a speaker or panelists inform family members about the effects of bullying and ways to cope with and end it)

PREPARING A PRESENTATION

When you approach your school administration and colleagues for support, your request should demonstrate a need for *No Name-Calling Week*, while showing that it will promote school goals rather than detract from them. Follow these steps in order to encourage a productive discussion and garner enthusiastic support for a *No Name-Calling Week* in your school.

1. *Gather data.* Use the statistics listed in the introduction, or consult some of the complete studies to get additional facts about the epidemic of name-calling and other forms of bullying, and their effects on young people. School guidance staff may have additional literature to share. Presenting data from reliable sources demonstrates how verbal bullying is a concern for students, educators, and parents everywhere.
2. *Gather anecdotal evidence.* You have probably witnessed verbal bullying among students in your school, or may have heard about incidents of name-calling from teachers, parents, staff, or students. Record these stories (keeping individual identities anonymous) and share them when you seek support, as they demonstrate a need for anti-bullying education in your particular school. (See Appendix 1—Student Survey: Name-Calling and Verbal Bullying)
3. *Anticipate concerns.* There are a few key reservations that may come up during your conversations with administrators and colleagues. Being prepared with statistical and anecdotal information will go a long way towards assuaging doubts about the necessity of education on this issue. In addition, consider these common concerns and possible responses to them.
 - *School is for academics.* School is undoubtedly the place for academics, but those who experience bullying or live in fear of being the next target are frequently distracted from their academic work. There is a strong correlation between bullying and poor academic achievement for both the targets of bullying and the bullies themselves. Share the statistics that demonstrate this with your colleagues, and emphasize that a program that discourages bullying may result in improved achievement among students. In addition, encourage colleagues to peruse the *No Name-Calling Week* curriculum, which is heavily grounded in reading, writing, and critical thinking experiences that can be integrated into a variety of subject areas.
 - *There's no time for a No Name-Calling Week.* Again, refer to your statistics. Bullying results in high absenteeism among those who experience it and reducing incidents of name-calling in school means more instructional hours for those students. In addition, time spent in the short term increasing empathy and effective ally behavior among students will save everyone time in the long run as disciplinary problems, fights, guidance interventions, classroom management issues, and other problems diminish. *No Name-Calling Week* is a great first step in opening a dialogue that can eventually change a school's climate, and taking that first step now can save valuable time later.
 - *We don't have a name-calling problem in our school.* Collect and share specific anecdotal information with administrators and colleagues to demonstrate the reality at your school (see Appendix 1—Student Survey: Name-Calling and Verbal Bullying). Remind them that most bullying occurs outside the classroom and away from the watchful eyes of adults. It happens in the hallways, the cafeteria, the schoolyard, the locker room, and on the bus. Often, this bullying goes unreported because of fear, embarrassment, or pressure not to “tattle.” Though many teachers and staff members are able to effectively stop bullying in the classroom, they have little control over what happens when the bell rings. Meanwhile, students suffer the effects of being bullied, including lowered academic performance, heightened absenteeism, and emotional problems.
4. *Know the bottom line.* Be prepared to brief your administration and colleagues on the anticipated costs of the program, both in dollars and labor. If there will be significant costs, suggest fundraising or donor possibilities.

BUILDING INVOLVEMENT ACROSS THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Once you have support for *No Name-Calling Week*, it's time to get the school community involved in planning. Creating a team of active participants across different groups—teachers, staff, students, families, and mental health professionals—is essential to the success of your program.

INVOLVING CLASSROOM TEACHERS

It is critical that teachers play a leading role in *No Name-Calling Week*, as the program relies on classroom experiences to get its message across. But how do you convince your school's teachers—with their already overburdened schedules—to participate in this weeklong project?

First, make it clear to teachers that involvement in *No Name-Calling Week* need not be a full-time commitment. They can participate by simply displaying posters in their classrooms, wearing stickers, and reminding students of the week's no name-calling message. In addition, they can make a commitment to read about ways to support students who experience bullying and intervene proactively when name-calling and bullying occur in their presence (see Appendix 4—For School Personnel: Providing Support to Children who are Bullied). Teachers with limited planning time may also want to consider screening the *No Name-Calling* video or reading excerpts from *The Misfits*, which are included in the *No Name-Calling Week* Education Kit and require little preparation time. Teachers who wish to be more involved can implement lessons from this resource guide, develop supplementary materials that they can use in class, and get involved in the planning of school wide events.

The curricular experiences in this guide are easiest to incorporate into English, Language Arts, and Social Studies classes. However, name-calling is an issue that impacts students in every classroom, so teachers in all subject areas are encouraged to set aside at least one class period for discussions and instructional work around name-calling. Ideally, teams of educators that teach particular grades or clusters of students will work together to coordinate lessons and experiences so that students are hearing consistent messages as they move from class to class. Consider including math, science, social studies, language arts, health, physical education, arts education, special education, and foreign language teachers in your planning. Encourage colleagues in all departments to submit their ideas for subject specific lessons and activities about name-calling and bullying to www.NoNameCallingWeek.org and to check this website periodically for new resources from partner organizations and other educators across the country. *No Name-Calling Week* is a national movement, so ideas for integrating this topic into all subjects and facets of school life will grow as more school communities become involved and share their successes.

In order to build teacher involvement, you must of course get the word out. Consider distributing informational flyers in staff mailboxes, writing an article for the faculty newsletter, and sending electronic updates and announcements to staff. The most direct and effective way to communicate information about *No Name-Calling Week* is by presenting at a faculty meeting or voluntary session during lunch or after-school. Your presentation should be brief and should give faculty an idea of what will be expected of them as participants, as well as the expected impact of the program. Consider sharing the following information with your school's faculty:

- Statistics on verbal bullying and its effects
- Brief testimony by students about verbal bullying at your school
- A synopsis of *The Misfits* by James Howe
- A brief clip of the *No Name-Calling* video
- Several activities from the "Lesson Plans" section of this guide
- A rundown of your ideas for school wide *No Name-Calling Week* activities
- Suggestions on what they can do to participate

It might also be helpful to enlist grade or department leaders who can take responsibility for passing materials and information along as the planning process continues, or to choose an area for posting *No Name-Calling Week* information and updates in the faculty lounge.

INVOLVING STUDENTS

Since *No Name-Calling Week* is intended to impact student attitude and behavior, youth should be involved in the planning process. Depending on the age and abilities of students, there are plenty of ways for students to be involved and to make *No Name-Calling Week* an experience that resonates with young people. Asking for volunteers is a great way to initially involve students, as those who have been affected by verbal bullying might want to do something proactive about it. Make a morning announcement, ask teachers to make individual classroom pitches, and distribute information via student government and extracurricular clubs to inform students about the project and invite them to a planning session. At the meeting, be sure to work with students as equal partners and to incorporate their ideas rather than telling them what is going to happen. Allow students to choose the tasks with which they wish to assist and to form working groups with peers and adults. Students may be interested in working on one or more of the following projects:

- Creating posters and slogans to decorate hallways and classrooms
- Conducting a student survey about name-calling and bullying (see Appendix 1)
- Helping to develop an anti-slur policy for the school and/or educating others about it
- Participating in student reading or discussion groups about bullying
- Making announcements about upcoming *No Name-Calling Week* events
- Participating in or judging *No Name-Calling Week* essay and poster contests
- Writing an article about *No Name-Calling Week* for the school newspaper
- Creating and performing dramatic pieces about bullying for performance during a school assembly, or for use during a peer education session
- Participating in peer education by sharing stories or role-plays with students in younger grades (see, for example, *Using The Misfits to Promote Service Learning on page ___*)

INVOLVING GUIDANCE STAFF

Your school's guidance staff has experience and expertise in dealing with bullying and its effects, so take advantage of their knowledge. Guidance staff can play a pivotal role in educating members of your school community. Ask them to provide support at faculty presentations and to conduct trainings for security, health, transportation, custodial and cafeteria staff in order to improve their ability to intervene in bullying. Counselors can also be of service by facilitating an informational session for parents and family members.

Guidance staff will be best prepared to work with students on bullying issues during *No Name-Calling Week*. If counselors run discussion or support groups for students, you might suggest that they consider name-calling as a topic for this week and beyond. Counseling staff can be encouraged to make classroom visits to discuss bullying from a psychological angle, and can display *No Name-Calling Week* posters in their offices to mark them as safe spaces for discussion about bullying. Remember to share this resource guide with guidance staff, who might benefit from accessing some of the studies cited, and make sure they receive a copy of Appendix 6, which includes bullying prevention and intervention information for health and safety professionals.

In order to implement all of the above, guidance staff can consider inviting outside mental health professionals to participate in *No Name-Calling Week* events. The following organizations are all *No Name-Calling Week* partners and your guidance staff may want to contact local affiliates for resources and support with your school's efforts to address bullying: American Counseling Association, American School Counselor Association, American School Health Association, Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders, National Association of School Nurses, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Social Workers, National Mental Health Association, and School Social Work Association of America.

INVOLVING SUPPORT STAFF

It's important to consider the role school support staff plays in ending name-calling, and to strengthen that role during *No Name-Calling Week*. Most bullying occurs outside the classroom, in places where support staff is often present—the hallways, cafeteria, schoolyard, locker room and school bus. Security, cafeteria, transportation, custodial and recreational staff are likely to witness and be called upon by students to intervene in bullying on a daily basis. *No Name-Calling Week* provides a great opportunity to train school support staff to recognize the problems caused by verbal bullying, and to act as positive agents in ending name-calling. As suggested earlier, you might ask a guidance counselor or outside mental health professional to provide support staff with training on bullying and intervention techniques. If this is not possible, share the fact sheet for school personnel (see Appendix 4) and talk with support staff about effective ways to support students. Encouraging support staff to wear *No Name-Calling Week stickers* is another way to involve the full staff and to remind students that all of the adults at school are concerned about bullying and prepared to intervene to protect them.

INVOLVING LIBRARY STAFF

Students often turn to their school libraries for information when faced with problems or challenges. How well is your library serving those students who are coping with or are witnesses to bullying? *No Name-Calling Week* is a great time to update the school's media collection with resources that offer insight and healthy strategies for coping with and undoing this problem.

Bullying is a recurrent theme in children's and young adult literature, but unfortunately, authors often pose unrealistic or unhealthy solutions to a very real problem. *No Name-Calling Week* is the perfect occasion to revisit your school's collection of literature to see how it treats this topic. Encourage library staff to order materials from the bibliography included in this guide, which includes a number of books that handle the subject of bullying realistically and open opportunities for thought and discussion. Ask library staff to make class sets of these and other resources available so they can be used in the classroom and library for literature circles and reading groups.

Ask library staff to support *No Name-Calling Week* by wearing stickers, displaying posters, and creating eye-catching displays of titles that deal with bullying. The chosen resources should depict positive resolutions to bullying (for example, talking to a teacher or finding comfort with friends versus physically fighting or plotting revenge). Health resources that teach coping skills or offer studies on bullying would also be ideal for display. If the library runs a book club or any other sort of structured reading activity, ask that books that deal with verbal bullying be utilized during the week. If the library includes a computer station, encourage staff to feature student friendly websites that provide age appropriate and positive information about bullying.

INVOLVING PHYSICAL EDUCATION STAFF

Much verbal bullying occurs in the locker room and on the playing field, where children are often judged by their peers on the basis of physical appearance or ability. *No Name-Calling Week* is a time for athletic staff to explore the concept of sportsmanship with their students, and to promote sport and exercise as an opportunity to build community and improve health, rather than as a way to brand students as "winners" and "losers."

During *No Name-Calling Week*, ask athletic staff to plan noncompetitive, cooperative activities for their classes that encourage team building and group cohesion. Encourage teachers and coaches to spend a few minutes discussing sportsmanship with their classes, and to prominently display and reinforce rules of conduct that promote positive behavior. A special emphasis can be placed on prohibiting names that are used reflexively to disparage students who are not athletically inclined (e.g., fag, spaz, you throw like a girl). Teachers and coaches can discuss this language before it surfaces, role-play more appropriate expressions of frustration with students, and introduce rituals and language that build rather than diminish self-esteem (e.g., high fives and "nice try").

Physical education department heads can also work with the school guidance department to create an intervention strategies worksheet that they can share with physical education teachers and coaches, who likely face more challenges around bullying than other teachers in your school. Guidance staff may also be willing to facilitate a lunchtime or after school discussion for athletic staff, with the intent of bringing educators together to share tips and brainstorm solutions.

INCORPORATING THE ARTS

Artistic expression can be a powerful vehicle through which to explore name-calling and bullying, and can be healing for many students. Involve the music, art, drama and other arts education staff in your *No Name-Calling Week* planning. These teachers may want to plan specific in-class activities, and will also be instrumental in helping to make assemblies and school wide events lively and engaging. In collaboration with art educators, students can listen to, perform and compose music about social issues. They can express their experiences with bullying through painting, drawing and other visual arts. They can explore their feelings about social cruelty and practice intervention strategies through role-play, movement, and dramatic performance. Arts educators can also work with students to publicize *No Name-Calling Week* by developing flyers, posters, rap songs, and traveling skits or commercials that are informative and inspire others to get involved.

INVOLVING FAMILIES

Family members play an integral part in shaping children's attitudes towards name-calling and other forms of bullying, so it's only natural that they take part in *No Name-Calling Week*. Many family members will be happy to learn more about verbal bullying and how to address it, as most parents and guardians have dried the tears of a teased child at one time or another. There are many ways in which family members can help you make *No Name-Calling Week* a success, as well as benefit from educational opportunities. Consider incorporating some of the following strategies for engaging family members in your week:

- Plan a homework activity that requires the involvement of family members. For example, you can ask students to interview a family member about their feelings and experiences about verbal bullying, or ask family members to read and discuss literature that addresses bullying with their children.
- Send a copy of the bibliography included in this guide to family members, and encourage them to borrow books from the school or local library to share with their children. If your class will be reading *The Misfits*, select chapters to be read with family members for homework.
- Ask the Parent Teacher Association to do fundraising for the week's events. If you are inviting a speaker, or plan to hold a reception after an event, the PTA's help can be invaluable.
- Ask for volunteers to run a poster-making workshop for students after school.
- Plan an event for adult family members. Invite a guidance counselor or other mental health professional to speak about verbal bullying. Intersperse the lecture with interactive activities, like small-group discussions or role-plays that explore how to support children who are bullied or intervene when bullying occurs.
- Find out if there are any family members who are mental health professionals. Perhaps they would be willing to assist the guidance counselors in planning or facilitating family and staff trainings.
- Share the resources for families in Appendices 2 and 3, which include information about what to do if a child is being bullied and how to talk with educators about bullying.

Outreach to family members should start with a note from the principal or a guidance counselor introducing them to the *No Name-Calling Week* program and suggesting ways in which they can be involved. We offer a template on the following page, which you can adapt to suit your school community's needs.

SAMPLE LETTER TO FAMILIES ABOUT NO NAME-CALLING WEEK

Dear Family Members,

I am writing to tell you about an exciting program that will be launched for the first time this year at Lowell Middle School. *No Name-Calling Week* was inspired by a young adult novel entitled *The Misfits* by popular author James Howe. The book tells the story of a group of friends trying to survive the seventh grade in the face of all too frequent taunts based on their weight, height, intelligence, sexual orientation, and gender expression. Motivated by the inequities they see around them, the “Gang of Five” (as they are known) creates a new political party during student council elections and runs on a platform aimed at wiping out name-calling of all kinds. They win the support of the school’s principal for their cause and their idea for a “No Name Day” at school.

Motivated by this simple yet powerful idea, a coalition of over forty education, youth advocacy, and mental health organizations have partnered to organize an actual *No Name-Calling Week* in schools across the nation annually. The project seeks to focus national attention on the problem of name-calling in schools, and to provide students and educators with the tools and inspiration to launch an ongoing dialogue about ways to eliminate name-calling in their communities.

At Lowell, we recognize the importance of building empathy and teaching respect to our students, and note the impact words can have on their well-being. A recent survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that students aged 9 to 13 consider name-calling the worst kind of verbal bullying, and that threatening words or taunting based on race or appearance have as much negative impact as does physical bullying. According to the study, students who regularly experience verbal and non-verbal forms of bullying report hurt feelings, low self-esteem, depression, living in fear and torment, poor academic achievement, physical abuse, and suicide. *No Name-Calling Week* is one way in which we are responding to these upsetting statistics.

No Name-Calling Week will take place during the week of March 1st through 5th. Students will work on a variety of activities that will help them realize the impact of verbal bullying, and teach them strategies for coping with and putting an end to name-calling, including reading and writing assignments, a poster and essay contest, a school assembly, and discussion groups. In addition, we’ll provide training opportunities to our school staff on appropriate responses to verbal bullying. We encourage families to join us in our effort to educate by initiating conversations about language and empathy with their children, and by attending a special *No Name-Calling Week* family event. Guidance staff and other speakers will be on hand to discuss the effects of name-calling, as well as simple things you can do in your home to help your child cope with bullying and treat others with respect. We will send further notices detailing the date and time of the family event, as well as other ways you can be involved in Lowell Middle School’s *No Name-Calling Week*. Please find attached an information sheet for families, which we hope will help you support your child(ren)’s emotional health, growth, and success in school.

We hope that No Name-Calling Week will help all students consider the weight of the words they use, and make school a safer, healthier place for all of our children. We enthusiastically encourage your participation.

Sincerely,
Principal Smith

GETTING THE WORD OUT

After you've enlisted the support and involvement of people from all parts of the school community, it's time to get the word out about the project. In an elementary or middle school setting, the ways of publicizing any event are simple, and most of them have already been listed earlier in this section. Here's a quick list of things you can do to build momentum as you approach *No Name-Calling Week*.

- *Email*. At schools where students and faculty have accounts, send out reminders about upcoming events (family night, assembly, contests, etc). Write to family members and the PTA to introduce them to *No Name-Calling Week* and to let them know how they can participate.
- *Use newspapers and public announcements*. Take advantage of the school's media. Ask a student to write an article about *No Name-Calling Week*—why it's necessary, what the program plans to accomplish, and how others can get involved. Or ask for a spot during morning announcements to get students and teachers excited and to brief them on happenings.
- *Make posters and flyers*. Encourage students to create posters and flyers. These can be made as an art class assignment, as a contest, or as an after-school activity led by your student team. Or sponsor a poster contest with a small prize for the winner. Display the artwork in high traffic areas a week before *No Name-Calling Week* starts to get students talking.
- *Essay Contest*. Sponsor an essay contest with a small prize to get students thinking and writing about verbal bullying. Pick a topic like "Imagining Our School Without Name-Calling."
- *Spruce up the library*. Set up a display of books—from fiction to mental health resources—that deal with name-calling and other forms of bullying.
- *Write to family members*. Send a letter home with students to let family members know about the week and how they can get involved.
- *Bulletin Board*. Ask your school administration to designate a bulletin board or other display space in a high traffic area as the *No Name-Calling Week* board, and post announcements, student writing, artwork and other project information.

If you've assigned department, grade or student leaders to pass news along to others, remind them of plans and deadlines regularly. Posting updates in the faculty lounge and student spaces is another way to disseminate information.

PLANNING SCHOOL WIDE EVENTS

Events such as school assemblies, family and staff trainings, and peer education programs take extra planning. Choosing a point person for each event will save you time and spread responsibility. Here are some tips to consider when getting ready.

SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

To engage students, stay away from a lecture format. A successful assembly might combine some words from a guidance counselor, a reading of a winning contest essay, plus a performance of a dramatic piece or screening of an appropriate film (check out the film resources listed in the bibliography).

STAFF TRAINING

Keep the training fairly brief (an hour to an hour and a half) to encourage higher attendance. Offer light refreshments as an incentive to participate. Combine a lecture format with opportunities for staff members to share their experiences with bullying and discuss intervention strategies. You might show clips of the bullying scenarios in the *No Name-Calling* video and ask how staff members might intervene in the situations shown. Hand out copies of the resource entitled, "For School Personnel: Providing Support to Children who are Bullied" (see Appendix 4).

FAMILY EVENT

The format of this event can be similar to the one planned for staff members. Combine talk from guidance staff or outside mental health professionals with role-playing, small-group discussions, and opportunities for asking questions and sharing ideas. Distribute copies of the resources entitled, “For Parents and Families: What to do if a Child is Being Bullied” and “For Parents and Families: How to Talk with Educators at Your Child’s School About Bullying” (see Appendices 2 and 3).

PEER EDUCATION

Have students bring the *No Name-Calling Week* message to their younger peers. Students can write and illustrate stories to share—or read any of the great picture books included in the bibliography—and then facilitate discussions about them. Similarly, students can perform skits for younger students, or engage them in interactive drama activities. The *Director’s Cut* and *Using The Misfits to Promote Service Learning* activities beginning on page ___ provide some useful ideas for role-play and peer education with younger students.

WRAPPING IT UP AND PLANNING AHEAD

As your *No Name-Calling Week* activities come to a close, make sure to celebrate the hard work and accomplishments of students and staff. Hold an assembly or other culminating event at which students discuss their experiences, share work they have produced, and receive certificates that recognize participation in or special contributions to the week. At this time, it is also important to consider how your school will carry the message of empathy and respect throughout the rest of the year and beyond. Consider the following suggestions as you continue your work to end name-calling in your school:

- Ask students to write an article for the school newspaper about how the school’s climate was impacted by No Name-Calling Week.
- Conduct a report-back session with school support staff to find out how their experiences with student bullying have changed since the staff training, and to share new ideas and insights.
- Follow-up and educate around new or existing anti-slur and bullying policies.
- Ask student volunteers to conduct periodic surveys about name-calling to measure changes in student attitude and behavior.
- Continue peer education efforts with younger students.
- Continue name-calling discussion groups.
- Add new resources on bullying to the school library whenever they become available.
- Hold periodic staff development and family education sessions.