

This TC2-developed critical challenge was previously published as a Tools for Thought resource. Please refer to our Tools for Thought collection to access the tools referenced in this critical challenge.

# Investigating bullying



- Objectives:**
- sensitize students to the impact of bullying;
  - introduce and apply the featured concept and literacy strategies.

**Use the following activities to introduce the featured tools as you investigate the issue of bullying**

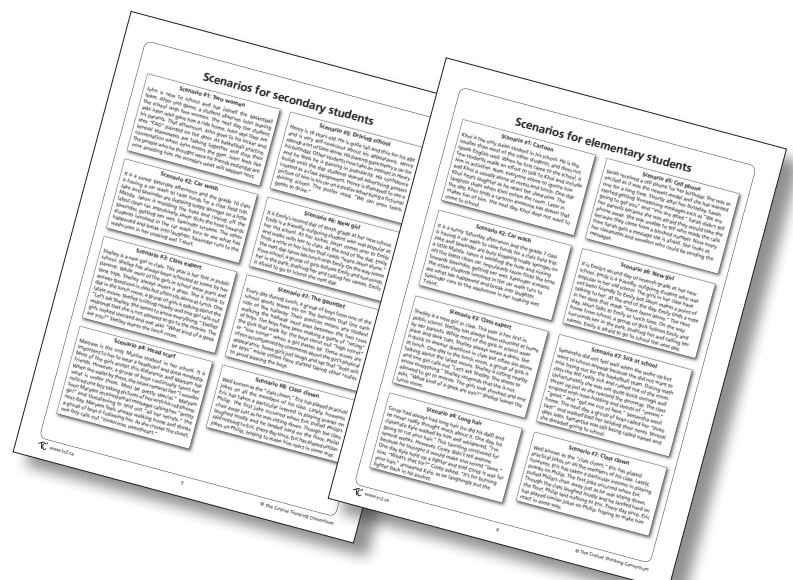
## Introduce the topic

- To introduce this topic to **SECONDARY STUDENTS**, play the song *Angel* by Sarah McLachlan. Set to an evocative melody, the lyrics portray the need to escape from the pain of feeling “not good enough” and “making up for all that you lack.”
- To introduce this topic to **ELEMENTARY STUDENTS**, play the song *Stand Up (to Bullies)* by Caroline Figiel and Danny Jones. (Available online at: <http://www.songsforteaching.com/carolineanddanny/standuptobullies.htm>.)
- While listening, ask students to record feelings that the words and music evoke.
- Discuss the song’s message. Invite students to speculate why this song is often chosen as the background for anti-bullying messages.

## Define bullying

- Pose the question: What is the difference between playing a prank, teasing, and bullying?
- Distribute a copy of *Scenarios for secondary students* or *Scenarios for elementary students* to groups of 3-4 students. Reflecting on the attributes of the types of bullying, direct students to sort the scenarios into three categories:

Harmless teasing	Mean-spirited teasing	Bullying



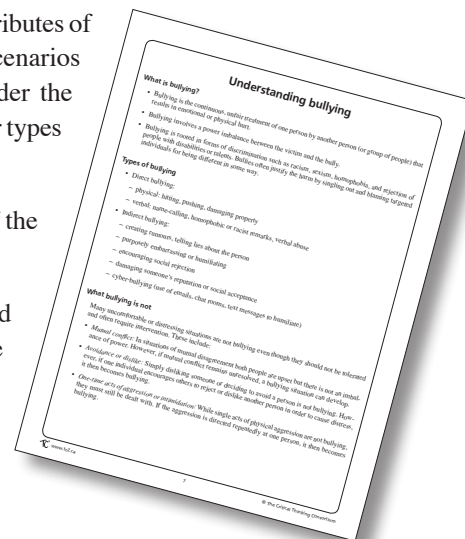
- On the board, create a chart similar to the one above. As a class, discuss the scenarios and students' categorizations of them. Identify the distinguishing attributes for each type of behaviour.

- Distribute *Understanding bullying*. Read aloud the attributes of bullying and review students' categorization of the scenarios in light of these attributes. Invite students to consider the importance of distinguishing bullying from these other types of actions.

Identify points  
of view

- Introduce the strategy found in *Point of view* (part of the Tools for Thought collection).

- As a class, think back to the scenario examples and create a web of relevant points of view for one or more of the instances of bullying (for example, the points of view of the victim, victim's family, bully, bully's family, school administration, teachers, bystanders, friends of victims, friends of bully, community groups, police).



Examine  
individual situations

- Review the relationship between point of view and opinion. Ask each student to expand on one point of view (for example, school principal) from one of the scenarios, and suggest a reasonable accompanying opinion (for example, the bully should be punished and a school-wide initiative established to prevent further occurrences).

- Point out that actions and words, both spoken and written, often provide clues about a person's thoughts, feelings, and values.

- Introduce the strategy *Inside someone's head* (part of the Tools for Thought collection).

- Provide each group of 3-4 students with one grade-appropriate scenario. Ask each group to use *Evidence of inner thoughts* to record the thoughts, feelings, and values of the individual or groups in the scenario.

- Introduce the strategy *Writer's voice* (part of the Tools for Thought collection).

- Introduce "zero tolerance" as a policy adopted by many schools to combat bullying:

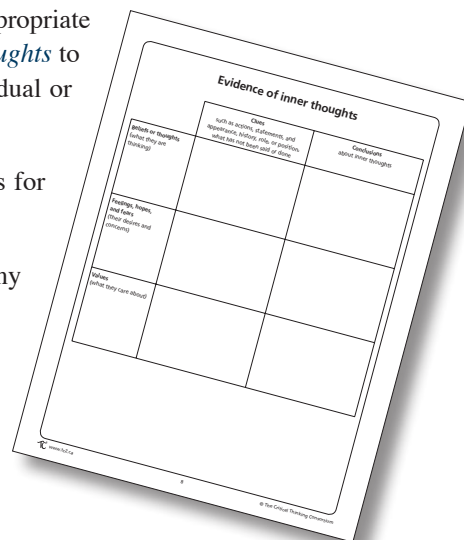
*Zero tolerance is an approach to serious infractions (such as bullying) where specified penalties apply automatically without exception or leniency whenever a particular rule has been broken. The punishment for someone who is judged to have bullied another might be automatic suspension for a period of time.*

Explore responses  
to bullying

- Brainstorm with the class criteria for establishing an effective school policy towards bullying. Criteria might include:

- *solves the problem*: offers an effective, long-term solution to the problem.
- *respects all person's rights*: recognizes and protects the rights of everyone involved.

- Invite students to consider these criteria when deciding whether or not zero tolerance is an effective solution to bullying. Brainstorm points of view that might be investigated when applying these criteria (for example, victim, perpetrator, bystander, school superintendent, parent).



- **FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS**, introduce the *Research question* strategy (part of the Tools for Thought collection). Using a jigsaw strategy, divide the class into four “expert groups” and assign one of the following “modes of thinking” to each group:
  - *psychological point of view* (Why do people become bullies? Why do bystanders let it happen? Will zero tolerance have an effect?)
  - *ethical point of view* (What is a fair way to protect potential victims? What is fair treatment for bullies?)
  - *educational point of view* (How do people “learn” to act in these ways? What can be done to “teach” individuals not to bully? How does bullying affect the school environment?)
  - *legal point of view* (What is the legal status of bullying? Should bullying be treated as a criminal offence?)
- **WITH ELEMENTARY STUDENTS**, divide the class into four “expert” groups and assign one of the following types of bullying to each group.
  - physical bullying
  - verbal bullying
  - rejection
  - damaging reputation

- Working in pairs, invite **SECONDARY STUDENTS** to use *Generating guiding questions* to identify questions to investigate about the appropriateness of zero tolerance from their assigned point of view. Invite **ELEMENTARY STUDENTS** to use *Generating guiding questions* to identify questions that will help them investigate the appropriateness of zero tolerance for their assigned type of bullying. Instruct each pair to select and research one or more of these questions.

**Generating guiding questions**

Purpose of the research assignment:  
Clarified task and focus:

Prior information: What I know about the topic

Related ideas

Possible research questions

Underline the most effective questions:  
 • Provide clear, relevant directions  
 • Lead to interesting, important information  
 • Manageable to research

© The Critical Thinking Consortium

- Introduce the *Speaking notes* strategy (part of the Tools for Thought collection).
- Direct each expert group to use *Speaking notes organizer* to prepare speaking notes on the collective information gathered by each pair of students in their home group.
- Arrange for one representative from each expert group to meet in a group of four to hear the information from each of the assigned points of view or type of bullying. Encourage each representative to refer to the speaking notes prepared by the home group when presenting the information. Ask listeners to record the positive and negative aspects of zero tolerance from each point of view presented or for each type of bullying presented.

**Speaking notes organizer**

Complete speaking notes that would help you make an oral presentation.

Purpose of task: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of task: \_\_\_\_\_

Audience expectations: \_\_\_\_\_

Theme/idea or main idea: \_\_\_\_\_

Opening statement: \_\_\_\_\_

Main points: \_\_\_\_\_

Conclusion: \_\_\_\_\_

Support examples/details: \_\_\_\_\_

© The Critical Thinking Consortium

## Debate the issue

- Invite students to consider all the information from the various points of view as the basis for deciding on a scale from “strongly support” to “strongly oppose” their position on zero tolerance.
- Arrange the class in a U-shape with students strongly supporting zero tolerance at one tip of the U and those strongly against the policy at the other end. Direct students with mixed opinions to sit at appropriate spots along the “U.”  
Begin by asking students at each tip of the “U” to state their positions. Encourage students to provide one or two reasons to support their position. Alternate from side to side until students from all locations along the “U” have shared their views.
- Encourage students to physically move along the “U” if they have changed their opinion on the issue.
- Following the discussion, invite students to record their thoughts on the issue on *U-shaped discussion reflections*.

**U-shaped discussion reflections**

Initial position: Write along the U-shaped continuum did you first state yours?

Reasons for and against

Changing positions: Did the reasons given by your neighbor whose position on the U-shaped continuum was different than yours lead you to change your position or reflect your position?

Reasons

Position on the U-shaped continuum

Reasons

Position on the U-shaped continuum

© The Critical Thinking Consortium

- Introduce the video *You're not alone: Anti-bullying*, which can be found at <http://ca.youtube.com/watch?v=DYXGV6lc8n4>. It presents statistics about bullying, characteristics of bullying, and images of the devastating outcomes of bullying. (Warning: the video includes images of young people who have committed suicide). Set to the lyrics of Sarah McLachlan's *Angel*, the video raises the following discussion topics:
  - Who is likely to be a bully and who is likely to be a target of bullying?
  - Why do people bully others?
  - What are the consequences of bullying?
- View one person's story, *Let's Fight it Together*, available online at [www.digizen.org](http://www.digizen.org). This short film, presented from the victim's perspective, tracks events in the life of a boy who is bullied at school. The bullying begins with his classmates' reaction to his enthusiasm in answering questions in class and spreads to other contexts. The video ends with the perpetrator, the boy's mother, his teacher, and a bystander discussing their views.

# Scenarios for secondary students

## Scenario #1: Two women

John is new to school and has joined the basketball team. After one game, a student observes John leaving the school with two women. The next day the student asks John who gave him a ride home. John says they are his parents. That afternoon, John goes to his locker and sees "FAG" painted on the door. At basketball practice, several teammates are talking together and stop their conversation when John enters the gym. John feels like the people who he thought were his friends yesterday are now avoiding him. He wonders what will happen next.

## Scenario #5: Driving school

Henry is 16 years old. He is quite tall and thin for his age and is very self-conscious about his appearance. Henry spends a lot of time alone. His parents gave Henry a car for his birthday. Other students now take an interest in Henry and he feels he is gaining in popularity. His confidence builds until the day students shared advertising posters created as a class assignment. Henry is dismayed to see a picture of him in his car on a poster advertising a fictional driving school. The poster read, "We can even teach geeks to drive."

## Scenario #2: Car wash

It is a sunny Saturday afternoon and the grade 10 class is having a car wash to raise funds for a class field trip. Jake and Sawinder are slopping soapy sponges on a little Mazda. Jason is wielding the hose and rinsing off the latest clean car. Impulsively, Jason flicks the hose towards Sawinder, getting her wet. Sawinder screams. The other students involved in the car wash turn to see what has happened and break into laughter. Sawinder runs to the washroom in her soaking wet T-shirt.

## Scenario #6: New girl

It is Emily's second day of tenth grade at her new school. Emily is a friendly, outgoing student who was popular at her old school. At her locker, Jason comes over to Emily and walks with her to class. At the end of the day, Emily finds a note in her locker that reads "leave Jason alone." The next day Jason has lunch with Emily. On the way home from school, a group of girls follows Emily and surrounds her in the park, pushing her and calling her names. Emily is afraid to go to school the next day.

## Scenario #3: Class expert

Shelley is a new girl in class. This year is her first in public school. Shelley has always been schooled at home by her parents. While most of the girls in school wear jeans and tank tops, Shelley always wears a dress. She is quick to answer questions in class but often sits alone at lunch. One day in the lunch room, a group of girls is talking about the latest movie. Shelley is sitting nearby and one girl calls out "Let's ask Shelley. She seems to know everything." Shelley responds that she is not allowed to go to the movies. The girls looked shocked and one asks "What kind of a geek are you?" Shelley leaves the lunch room.

## Scenario #7: The gauntlet

Every day during lunch, a group of boys from one of the school sports teams sits on the benches that line each side of the hallway. Their position means any student walking the hallway must pass between the two rows of boys. The boys have been making a game of "rating" the girls that walk by: the boys shout out "high scores" or "low scores" when a girl passes by. These scores are often accompanied by comments about the girl's physical appearance. Some girls just laugh and say that "boys will be boys" while others have started taking other routes to avoid passing the boys.

## Scenario #4: Head scarf

Maryam is the only Muslim student in her school. It is important to her to wear a headscarf and dress modestly. Most of the girls accept this difference and Maryam has friends. However, a group of boys continually taunt her. When she walks by them, she hears remarks like "I wonder what is under there. Must be pretty special." Maryam noticed one boy taking pictures of her with his cell phone. Soon Maryam received email messages calling her "pretty girl" and threatening to find out "all her secrets." The next day, Maryam feels uneasy walking home and thinks a group of boys is following her. As she crosses the street, one boy calls out "tomorrow, sweetheart."

## Scenario #8: Class clown

Well known as the "class clown," Eric has played practical jokes on all the members of his class. Lately, however, Eric has taken a particular interest in playing pranks on Philip. The first joke occurred when Eric pulled Philip's chair away just as he was sitting down. Though the class laughed loudly and he landed hard on the floor, Philip said nothing to Eric. Every day since, Eric has played similar jokes on Philip, hoping to make him react in some way.



# Scenarios for elementary students

## Scenario #1: Cartoon

Khoi is the only Asian student in his school. He is shy, smaller than most of the other students, and does not speak English well. When he first came to the school, a few students made an effort to talk to Khoi and include him in activities. Now, everyone seems to ignore him and Khoi is usually alone at recess and lunch. One day Khoi hears laughter as he nears the classroom. The laughter stops when Khoi enters the room. Later in the day, Khoi finds a cartoon someone has drawn that makes fun of him. The next day, Khoi does not want to come to school.

## Scenario #5: Cell phone

Sarah received a cell phone for her birthday. She was so excited as it was the newest model and she has wanted one for a long time. Shortly after her birthday, Sarah started getting threatening messages such as "We are going to get you" and "You are dead." Sarah didn't tell her parents because she was afraid they would take the phone away. She was unable to tell who made the calls because they came from a blocked number. Now every time Sarah gets a message she is afraid. She looks at her classmates and wonders who could be sending the messages.

## Scenario #2: Car wash

It is a sunny Saturday afternoon and the grade 7 class is having a car wash to raise funds for a class field trip. Jake and Sawinder are busy slopping soapy sponges on a little Mazda. Jason is wielding the hose and rinsing off the latest clean car. Impulsively Jason flicks the hose towards Sawinder, getting her wet. Sawinder screams. The other students involved in the car wash turn to see what has happened and break into laughter. Sawinder runs to the washroom in her soaking wet T-shirt.

## Scenario #6: New girl

It is Emily's second day of seventh grade at her new school. Emily is a friendly, outgoing student who was popular in her old school. The girls in her class have not been friendly to Emily but Jason makes a point of talking to her. At the end of the day, Emily finds a note in her desk that reads "leave Jason alone." The next day, Jason talks to Emily at lunch time. On the way home from school, a group of girls follows Emily and surrounds her in the park, pushing her and calling her names. Emily is afraid to go to school the next day.

## Scenario #3: Class expert

Shelley is a new girl in class. This year is her first in public school. Shelley has always been schooled at home by her parents. While most of the girls in school wear jeans and tank tops, Shelley always wears a dress. She is quick to answer questions in class but often sits alone at lunch. One day in the lunch room, a group of girls is talking about the latest movie. Shelley is sitting nearby and one girl calls out "Let's ask Shelley. She seems to know everything." Shelley responds that she is not allowed to go to movies. The girls look shocked and one asks, "What kind of a geek are you?" Shelley leaves the lunch room.

## Scenario #7: Sick at school

Samantha did not feel well when she woke up but went to school anyway because she did not want to miss trying out for the basketball team. During math class she felt really sick and rushed out of the room. Unfortunately she was not quite quick enough and threw up just as she reached the doorway. The class erupted with nose-holding and shouts of "ewwww," "gross," and "get me out of here." Samantha went home. The next day a group of boys called her "puke face" and walked past her holding their noses. Several days later, Samantha was still being called names and she dreaded going to school.

## Scenario #4: Long hair

Corey had always had long hair (so did his dad) and he never really thought much about it. One day, his classmate Kyle walked by him and whispered, "I'm going to cut your hair." This taunting continued for several weeks. However, Corey didn't tell anyone because he thought it would make him sound "lame." One day Kyle held up a lighter and told Corey it was for him. "What's that for?" Corey asked. "It's for burning your hair," answered Kyle, as he laughingly put the lighter back in his pocket.

## Scenario #7: Class clown

Well known as the "class clown," Eric has played practical jokes on all the members of his class. Lately, however, Eric has taken a particular interest in playing pranks on Philip. The first joke occurred when Eric pulled Philip's chair away just as he was sitting down. Though the class laughed loudly and he landed hard on the floor, Philip said nothing to Eric. Every day since, Eric has played similar jokes on Philip, hoping to make him react in some way.

# Understanding bullying

## What is bullying?

- Bullying is the continuous, unfair treatment of one person by another person (or group of people) that results in emotional or physical hurt.
- Bullying involves a power imbalance between the victim and the bully.
- Bullying is rooted in forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and rejection of people with disabilities or talents. Bullies often justify the harm by singling out and blaming targeted individuals for being different in some way.

## Types of bullying

- Direct bullying:
  - physical: hitting, pushing, damaging property
  - verbal: name-calling, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse
- Indirect bullying:
  - creating rumours, telling lies about the person
  - purposely embarrassing or humiliating
  - encouraging social rejection
  - damaging someone's reputation or social acceptance
  - cyber-bullying (use of emails, chat rooms, text messages to humiliate)

## What bullying is not

Many uncomfortable or distressing situations are not bullying even though they should not be tolerated and often require intervention. These include:

- *Mutual conflict*: In situations of mutual disagreement both people are upset but there is not an imbalance of power. However, if mutual conflict remains unresolved, a bullying situation can develop.
- *Avoidance or dislike*: Simply disliking someone or deciding to avoid a person is not bullying. However, if one individual encourages others to reject or dislike another person in order to cause distress, it then becomes bullying.
- *One-time acts of aggression or intimidation*: While single acts of physical aggression are not bullying, they must still be dealt with. If the aggression is directed repeatedly at one person, it then becomes bullying.

## Evidence of inner thoughts

	<b>Clues</b> such as actions, statements, and appearance, history, role, or position, what has not been said or done	<b>Conclusions</b> about inner thoughts
<b>Beliefs or thoughts</b> (what they are thinking)		
<b>Feelings, hopes,            and fears</b> (their desires and concerns)		
<b>Values</b> (what they care about)		



## Generating guiding questions

Purpose of the research assignment:

Clarified task and focus:

Prior information: What I know about the topic	Related ideas	Possible research questions

- Underline the most effective questions:
- Provide clear, relevant direction
  - Lead to interesting, important information
  - Manageable to research

# Speaking notes organizer

Complete speaking notes that would help you make an oral presentation.

Purpose of talk: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of talk: \_\_\_\_\_

Audience expectations: \_\_\_\_\_

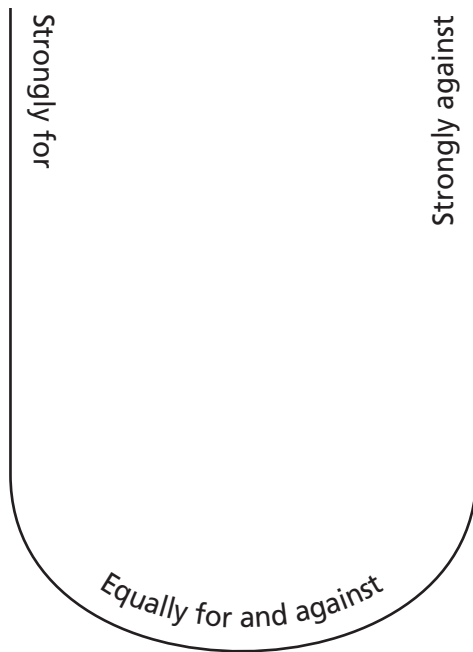
Theme/title or main idea: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes	Helpful examples/details
Opening statement:	
Main points:	
Conclusion:	

# U-shaped discussion reflections

**Initial position.** Where along the U-shaped continuum did you first place yourself?



Explain the reasons for your initial choice

**Interesting arguments:** Describe the reasons given by two students whose position on the U-shaped continuum was different from yours but caused you to wonder about or rethink your position.

Position on the U-shaped continuum:	Position on the U-shaped continuum:
Reasons	Reasons