

Young Playwrights for Change: Year 4

Empathy in Action: Combating Bullying

Theme and Style Guide

- ❖ **THEME AND SUBJECT:** We are looking for plays that contain a hopeful and honest message that combats bullying; scripts that deal with the problems and consequences of bullying, but also possible solutions or positive changes. **Bullying** is unwanted, repeated, aggressive behavior among school aged children. Both kids who bully and kids who get bullied believe that the one who bullies is more powerful.
- ❖ **Characters:** The play could address the experiences of ...
 - **Kids who bully**
 - **Kids who are bullied**
 - **Kids who assist bullying:** These children may not start the bullying or lead in the bullying behavior, but encourage the bullying behavior and occasionally join in.
 - **Kids who encourage bullying:** These children give the bullying an audience. They will often laugh or provide support for bullying.
 - **Kids who observe/bystanders:** These children watch what is going on but do not show they are on anyone's side. These kids often want to help, but by providing a passive audience, they may be encouraging bullying without knowing it.
 - **Kids who defend:** These children comfort the child being bullied and may come to the child's defense.
 - Most kids play more than one role in bullying over time. Every situation is different. Some kids are both bullied and bully others.
- ❖ The play could address various types of bullying, including ...
 - **Verbal bullying** - saying or writing mean things: teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, and threats.
 - **Social bullying** - hurting someone's reputation or relationships: leaving someone out on purpose, telling other children not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors, and embarrassing someone in public.
 - **Physical bullying** - hurting a person's body or possessions: hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking things, and making mean or rude hand gestures.
- ❖ The play could address some other aspect of bullying, including ...
 - **Cyber bullying** - bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Examples of cyber bullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.
 - **Groups at risk** – bullying can happen anywhere, to anyone. But some groups are at a higher risk of being bullied, including youth who ...
 - ...are LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/ Questioning) or believed to be LGBTQ.
 - ...have disabilities or other special health needs.
 - ...are from religious or ethnic groups that are not part of the dominant group in a school or community.
- ❖ **STYLE.** We are looking for plays that are ...
 - **Creative** - Although we are looking for plays that deal honestly with the subject of bullying, they do not have to be realistic in style. Plays could feature animals or fantasy creatures as characters, for instance, and could be set in worlds other than our own.
 - **Appropriate** - We want plays that address the issue of bullying seriously, but they must be appropriate for middle-school audiences to read, see and perform. We are not looking for profanity or offensive material.