

No-Blame Bullying Approach – A Restorative Intervention



School resources

Reference	Angus Macfarlane; Sonja Macfarlane
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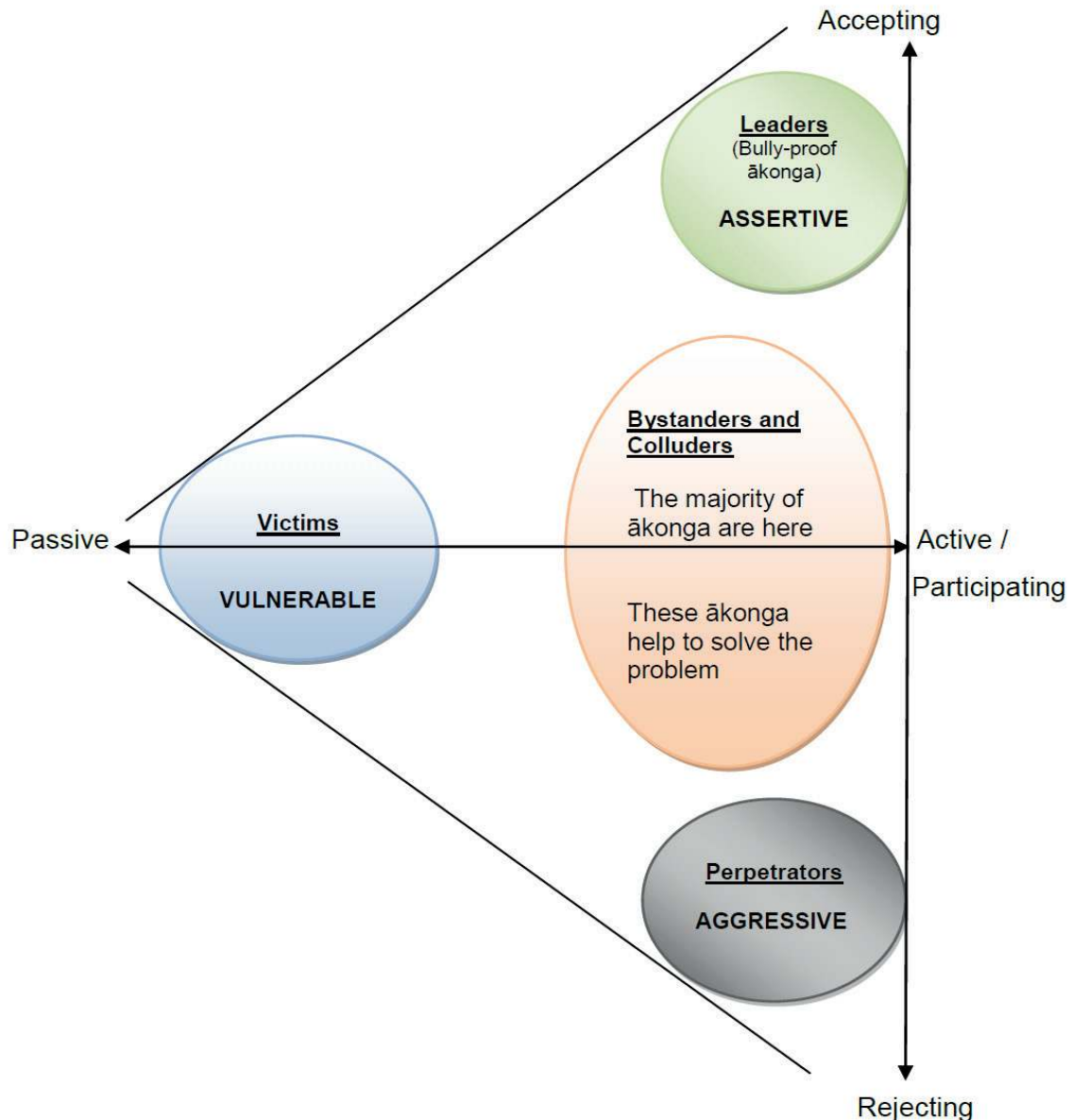
Kaupapa / Purpose	<i>No-Blame</i> is for use by teachers in their classrooms and by <i>No-Blame</i> coordinators school wide as a means of facilitating a restorative and mana-enhancing approach to responding to the victims and perpetrators of bullying.
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Whakapapa / History	The <i>No-Blame</i> approach to bullying originated in the mid to late 1990s in Aotearoa New Zealand, and was actively promoted by the New Zealand Police as an inclusive, restorative and non-punitive response to responding to bullying behaviours in schools. The approach to bullying seeks to identify how the victim is being affected by the bullying, and then uses a restorative support group comprising peers, colluders and perpetrators. By not blaming or punishing anyone, the group itself is encouraged to take responsibility for the problem and deal with it. An outline of the <i>No-Blame</i> approach follows.
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Descriptor	<p>Schools must firstly acknowledge that bullying exists; this involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involving the whānau and community about a proactive approach to any bullying that occurs in the school • raising awareness • talking about it... “<i>We don’t accept bullying here.</i>”; “<i>This is a safe place for everyone.</i>” • encouraging ākonga to report any bullying • being receptive to any reporting of bullying • remembering that the victim <i>cannot</i> deal with, or stop, the bullying behaviour: perpetrators must be supported to change <i>their</i> behaviours • engaging the silent majority – the bystanders and colluders • introducing staff and whānau to the Bully socio-graph (see diagram below) • appointing a <i>No-Blame</i> coordinator(s) in the school to manage the conferences: these leaders need to be culturally competent in tikanga Māori
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NB: ākonga is the Māori word for ‘student’ / ‘students’

The Bully socio-graph



Application

The No-Blame coordinator receives a report of bullying from a victim

STEP ONE

- ◆ Talk to the victim: provide empathy and support.
- ◆ Praise the victim for coming forward.
- ◆ Tell the victim that you will help to sort it out.
- ◆ Ask the victim to identify:

- This becomes the **CONFERENCE** group
- ◆ the Perpetrator(s) – the one or two main ones
 - ◆ the Bystanders and Colluders - two or three students with whom they are comfortable in their class; they may have been friends with these previously – they like these students
 - ◆ the Leaders ('bully-proof' students) – two or three students whom they admire; they are role-model students; they may be in their class, or another class.

STEP TWO

- ◆ Ask the victim to talk about how they feel about being bullied – what the bullying does to them, their thoughts and feelings... (encourage them to really 'let it out'). Their thoughts and feelings need to be recorded.....some students may be able to write this down themselves; for others, the coordinator will need to write it down for them as they talk.
- ◆ Ask for permission to use the letter at the *No-Blame* conference that is going to be held to sort things out.
- ◆ Inform the student's whānau of the situation and advise them that you will be sorting it out immediately at a *No-Blame* conference); get their consent.
- ◆ Inform the student's class teacher of the situation (advise them that a conference will be set up).
- ◆ **Inform** all of the students / ākonga (the 5 – 8 previously named and chosen by the victim) that they are going to attend a conference **to help sort out a bullying problem**. Over lunch is a great time to hold the *No-Blame* conference. Say "You have been named as a great person who can help a group - an undercover team - to solve a problem. We would love it if you could help us."
- ◆ Get **Informed Consent**: Inform the whānau / family of the named ākonga / students that their tamaiti will be part of a restorative conference to support another ākonga who is being bullied; send a note home to be signed – see end of this document.

N.B.: The victim does not attend the conference.

STEP THREE

The Conference:

- ◆ **The conference**: start the conference with a mihimihi/karakia. Make sure everyone knows everyone.
- ◆ At the conference, state 'We are here for a reason – we have a problem with bullying – and guys - we are all going to help sort it out...are you in?'
- ◆ Mention: 'This is a *No-Blame* conference – we are not here to go over whose fault it is, who started it, or who did what... we are going to resolve the problem.'
- ◆ Read out the letter written by the victim (Do not name the victim at this point).
- ◆ Ask them how hearing that letter makes them feel.
- ◆ On the whiteboard, you can draw a simple version of the socio-graph (refer diagram earlier) to describe what bullying looks like; what the dynamics of bullying situations are. Provide a general description of the characteristics of each of the four groups (Bullies, leaders, bystanders/ colluders, and victims). Emphasise the important role of leaders as the key to eradicating bullying.
- ◆ Inform the group who the victim is.
- ◆ Explain that the victim has identified them individually as a key person – and so you (the teacher) believe that they would make an excellent group member to help solve the problem. (Do not place the ākonga into any of the groups).
- ◆ Then initiate some problem-solving. Make statements like: 'This can't go on, can it?', and 'How can we all help?', and 'We all need to offer at least one idea to help sort this out and make things better for _____.'

Some ideas are likely to be:

- ◆ 'I could sit with him / her at lunch-time'

- ◆ ‘I could walk home with him / her’
- ◆ ‘I could ask him / her to join in our game’
- ◆ ‘If I see anyone name-calling or bullying him / her, I’ll go and help, or get a teacher’
- ◆ Go over ALL suggestions again. Often the perpetrators may not offer anything, so ask them directly what they can do to help the situation. Affirm them for their suggestion and reiterate it (ie: “Awesome suggestion Mark – so you are going to make sure that no one says mean things – you are going to tell them to stop – that is fantastic – thank you.”)
- ◆ Set up a brief “check-in meeting” for two days later, and another full follow-up conference for one week away, to monitor and review progress.
- ◆ Remind them all that this is confidential – no one else in the school knows that they are undercover – it is a treaty agreement!
- ◆ End the conference with a whakakapi (summary of everyone’s actions) and closing mihimihi/karakia.
- ◆ Continue to support the victim.
- ◆ Send a follow-up letter home to ALL conference members’ whānau to praise the positive contribution that their tamaiti has made to the school and community through attending this support group. (Just a brief photocopy note signed by you, to say how much you appreciated their child’s contributions to a meeting to support the inclusion of another student.)

Key indicators of Implementation

No-Blame should be used to determine the specific needs of students who are either victims or perpetrators of bullying, and require greater support to become more socially responsive and included. It is essential that teachers take a no-blame and restorative practice (whakamana) approach to responding to incidents of bullying. It is also important that areas of strength and potential are drawn on to guide pathways to success. *No-Blame* conferences ensure that perpetrators of bullying have an opportunity to change and become a proactive part of a solution. The conferences encourage ākongā to:

- respect people’s feelings
- actively listen
- take turns speaking (to not interrupt others)
- be non-judgemental
- speak respectfully (to avoid name calling)
- actively contribute
- take others’ perceptions and perspectives seriously
- to suggest proactive ways of solving problems

In order for *No-Blame* to work effectively, ākongā need opportunities to practice the skills of communication, listening and collective problem solving. In formal teaching time, the curriculum provides ongoing opportunities to include the practicing of social skills that are developmentally appropriate such as:

- listening
- being honest
- having empathy for others
- acknowledging / understanding different perspectives

- seeking clarification
- supporting vulnerable classmates,
- focusing on positive behaviours
- praising good choice-making
- identifying skills from curriculum time that can utilised in solution finding.

Additional References

Macfarlane, A. (2007). *Discipline, democracy and diversity: Working with students with behaviour difficulties*. Wellington, NZ: NZCER Press.

Sample Informed Consent note for whānau:

Kia ora _____

This note is to request your consent so that your son / daughter _____ can join a team of nominated leaders at _____ School. The team will be working collaboratively to ensure the inclusion of another student who needs support.

If you are happy for this to happen, please sign this form in the space below, and return to school.

Thank you in anticipation.

Caregiver signature: _____ Date: _____